THE JAZZ SINGER

ARLINE DE HAAS

Ethel McCreary.

THE JAZZ SINGER

A Warner Bros. Production. *The Jazz Singer.*

"LEAVE THE SYNAGOGUE—BROADWAY WANTS YOU!"

THE JAZZ SINGER

A STORY OF PATHOS AND LAUGHTER

NOVELIZED BY
ARLINE DE HAAS
FROM THE PLAY BY
SAMSON RAPHAELSON

ILLUSTRATED WITH SCENES
FROM THE PHOTOPLAY
A WARNER BROS. PRODUCTION
DIRECTED BY ALAN CROSLAND
STARRING
AL JOLSON

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	A Rift in the Lute	1
II	The Smouldering Flame	11
III	His First Flight	22
IV	Time, Like a Rolling Stream	34
V	Disturbing Bliss	45
VI	The Dawn of a New Day	58
VII	Weary Israel	69
VIII	A Broken Melody	80
IX	Eli, Eli	92
X	A Broken Bubble	103
XI	A Refrain Recaptured	117
XII	The Eternal Song	130
XIII	Gray, Gathering Storms	143
XIV	Between Two Fires	157
XV	Born of Desperation	170
XVI	The Greater Love	182
XVII	Anguished Hours	195
XVIII	The Call of His People	208
XIX	The Die Is Cast	221
XX	The Day of Atonement	235

THE CAST

THE CHARACTERS	THE PLAYERS
JAKIE RABINOWITZ later JACK ROBIN	**Al Jolson**
MARY DALE	May McAvoy
CANTOR RABINOWITZ	Warner Oland
SARA RABINOWITZ	Eugenie Besserer
MOISHA YUDELSON	Otto Lederer
JAKIE (13 YEARS OLD)	Bobbie Gordon
HARRY LEE	Richard Tucker
LEVI	Nat Carr
BUSTER BILLINGS	William Demarest
BILLINGS	Anders Randolf
DOCTOR	Will Walling

Based upon the play by Samson Raphaelson as produced on the spoken stage by Lewis & Gordon and Sam H. Harris
DIRECTED BY ALAN CROSLAND
Scenario by Alfred A. Cohn

THE JAZZ SINGER

CHAPTER I

A Rift in the Lute

The autumnal sun slid haltingly down worn, brick walls as though awaiting retreat call at any moment. It sifted through climbing fire escapes, throwing cubistic shadows from repetitional bars onto dingy windows. It caught on torn curtains of cheap lace lapping the slightly stirring air like monstrous white tongues. It glanced through tier on tier of grimly brilliant washings swaying nonchalantly; now carelessly licking the house fronts; now caressingly twining the iron rods that stepped zigzag up the tenements of Babel. Its stray beams scarcely caught the canvas tops of the push-carts that lined the narrow streets of the New York Ghetto—the Ghetto where the daily life throbs to the rhythm of a music as old as civilization.

As the afternoon wore on the cañonlike passages filled with lingering streams of people, rubbing elbows, pushing, jostling. The street vendors called their wares. Alien, murmuring

voices mingled with the clatter of horses' hoofs resounding on the cobbled roadways; vied with the "clang-clang" of the rumbling street cars; rose to crescendo as the elevated roared, moving snakelike, overhead. Women with baskets on their arms came to buy—young women with plump, shining cheeks, matrons with expansive bosoms, ancient grandmas with threadbare shawls half revealing their Orthodox Jewish wigs.

The curb markets flaunted their brilliant offerings. Long strings of brightly colored glass beads from Czecho-Slovakia; bedraggled furs from Russia; tinsel-embroidered slippers from Turkey; vivid, artificial flowers from the sweatshops of New York; cheaply made clothes from the factories; clams and oysters served on the half shell from the stand, seasoning provided; cotton hosiery waving a passing greeting; imported and native nuts of all varieties; lettuces, oranges, lemons, dried meats, biscuits, cookies, cakes, candies, cheeses. All, after hectic haggling, satiating the yawning maws of the market bags.

Doorsteps filled with swarming humanity. Cats blinked amid litters of papers caught in area ways. The long, flapping vestments of the bearded Rabbi passed in austere silence the many-petticoated skirts of the shoppers. Perambulators shook under chubby lumps of flesh.

Scantily clothed infants tumbled in the dust and were rescued and smartly reprimanded by slightly older and more scrawny sisters. Children wallowed in the débris of the pushcarts; ran beneath horses' legs; barely escaped passing trolleys; shrieked and laughed and cried in the bedlam of Ghetto activity.

From out the maze of noise came the faint sound of music. The children who had been playing tag on the corner stopped to listen. Then, with a shout, they were off and down the street. En masse they brought up before an Italian organ grinder, stopped and gazed on the hurdy-gurdy. With the click of a lever the organ broke out into a tremulous and wavering version of an ever popular song.

"East side, west side, all around the town
The tots sang 'ring-a-rosie,' 'London
bridge is falling down';"

The clear, young voices took up the air, and if the words were a little erroneous and the tune a little off key, they made up for it by dancing around gleefully, kicking up their legs and generally showing their approval of the entertainment. The organ grinder, unshaven, a weather-beaten, slouch hat set jauntily on one side of his head, a red handkerchief knotted about his neck, a corduroy suit bulging in the

most unexpected places, grinned and displayed a set of gleaming, white teeth. He looked up expectantly at the windows above him, and nodded pleasantly to a head that appeared from behind a curtain.

On rolled the tune, and more heads came into view—young heads and old heads. Arms akimbo, resting on the sill, women leaned forth to catch the strains of the music. Like a barrage of shell fire it seemed—these heads popping out from roof to basement. Hands went into stained apron pockets and coins came tumbling down. The music maker held out his ragged hat and dexterously caught the offerings as they fell. The lever clicked again, and "The Sidewalks of New York" was succeeded by the "Intermezzo" from "Cavalleria Rusticana."

Feeling that justice had been done to the amount of coins received, the man and his hurdy-gurdy started off down the street, still grinding forth the tune. The children followed, dancing their way along. But by this time the crowd had swollen to larger proportions. Houses turned out ragged urchins and tattered little girls to follow the Pied Piper. Each new addition joined in with abandon. Finally the Italian stopped once more, this time before an old, brownstone house next door to the Orchard Street Synagogue, and began another tune.

The sound of the music, now changed to

"The Bowery," floated in through the windows of the little anteroom of the Synagogue, and brought a bevy of small boys' heads to the fore. But even as they climbed to the sill to listen, the door from the Synagogue opened and a venerable and bearded man entered. He peered about the room and saw no one on the wooden benches. He looked toward the old, square piano. Not one soul was visible. Finally he started forward as the strains of the jazz music caught his ears. He frowned, disgusted, and closed the door behind him with a determined air.

He walked over to the window. From his point of vantage all that could be seen were the rear elevations of patched trousers and legs that stuck out almost perpendicular to the window ledge. With a determined tread he came up behind the boys, yanked them out of the window, cuffing them left and right. The frightened students ducked, and scrambled for their seats. The teacher took hold of the window and brought it down roughly, as though he could not quickly enough shut out the sounds. Then he turned and faced the boys, scowling majestically.

For if there was one abomination in the sight of Cantor Rabinowitz it was the sound of jazz and popular music. It was he who sang, and taught the youth of his congregation to sing,

the age-old songs of Judea. It was he who chanted, and taught the boys of his choir to chant, the prayers set to music that had been handed down from generation to generation. Cantor Rabinowitz, a man revered by all the Ghetto for his unswerving constancy to the faith of his fathers; respected by all his congregation for his deep, fine voice and his knowledge of Hebrew music.

The boys straightened up with solemn faces as their Cantor stood mumbling imprecations against such sacrilegious forms of music.

"Where is my son, Jakie?" he began at last, looking anxiously back and forth across the benches, now filled with his pupils.

"He's—he's—." Bang! a flash of shivered glass followed by a baseball, fell into the room before any one of the boys had time to answer the Cantor's question.

Cantor Rabinowitz picked up the ball and shook his head ominously. As he looked up he saw the door being opened cautiously, and the curly, black head of a youth, perhaps about the age of thirteen, appeared. Hesitating, fearful, the child slunk in.

"Jakie!" The Cantor's voice vibrated with anger.

"I—I couldn't help it, papa," the boy stammered, cringing in fear. "I didn't mean to hit it so hard. Honest, I didn't!"

The old man raised his hand as though to strike. The students on the benches looked expectantly from father to son, hoping for the added diversion of punishment for Jakie, and thus a prolongation of the beginning of their lessons. As Jakie saw his father's menacing attitude he ducked. But the hand dropped.

"Go!" The Cantor waved the boy to his seat. "I fix you good next time."

Jakie stared at his father, but the scholars were already being lined up for their singing lesson, and the child took his accustomed place among the others. Cantor Rabinowitz called them to attention. He walked over to the piano and struck a note. A sour sound issued forth. The master sniffed disdainfully—sorrowfully, even. From his inside coat pocket he produced an old-fashioned tuning fork, struck it on the side of the piano, and held it to his ear.

"M-m-m-m!" he hummed, giving the boys the key. "Nu, follow me!"

The Cantor poured forth a wailing chant in his deep resonant voice, imitated by his pupils. But he watched carefully that all mouths opened and sang lustily. And when one child looked longingly toward the windows his reward was a cuff on the ear.

"Oi! Don't I say yet you should sing—not make monkey bizness!" The Cantor burst out.

The boys who had been grinning and nudging

each other, shuffling their feet and wriggling about, quickly turned their eyes front as they heard the Cantor's words, and took up the chant with renewed vigor. But as unwilling as the spirit was the flesh. The students turned again and again to look out the window. They could hear faintly the outside sounds, the shouts of their playmates, the bustle of the streets. Their voices trailed fretfully, shrilly, waveringly, keyless.

The Cantor shook his head impatiently.

"Stop! Stop!" he called, raising his fists and shaking them in the air. "Go! You sound like crezzy cats crying already!"

The erstwhile scholars, scuffling noisily, made a beeline for the door, relieved. Jakie snatched his cap and began a hasty exit. But his father was quicker. The Cantor grabbed the boy by the shoulder, and held him firmly. Jakie followed the disappearing figures of his playmates with tearful eyes. When the last one had closed the door the father faced his son about.

"For why you should be playing so?" The irate parent pointed to the broken window.

The child backed away, shaking his head miserably. But the Cantor's anger was already changing to sadness.

"A fine Cantor you should bicome—smashing Synagogue windows yet!"

The boy looked up at his father, debating as to his answer. To him the future of Cantor in a Synagogue, so carefully planned out and so hopefully looked forward to by his father, held no essence of pleasantness for the young singer.

"But papa," the child finally managed to blurt out, "I don't want to be no Cantor."

"What! No Cantor!" The bearded singer gasped, unwilling to believe that his ears had heard aright. Why, this was pure blasphemy. He swallowed hard, and then smiled sarcastically.

"So! And you didn't want you should be a Cantor, what'll you going to be?" He waited for an answer to a question which he regarded as unanswerable.

Jakie decided to take his stand. He looked up at his father courageously.

"I want to be a singer in a theayter," he proclaimed, ducking again as though expecting the wrath of the ancients to fall upon his head.

The Cantor stared at the boy in amazement. He raised his hands in horror at the very thought. A Rabinowitz a singer in a theater!

"For five generations has been a Rabinowitz a Cantor," he burst out. "I teach you to be one! And you—you should be a common actor in a lowlife theayter!"

His beard bristled. He rushed for his son, shaking his fists excitedly. But the boy stood

his ground, gazing steadfastly at his father. The older man halted suddenly, looking down on the child. Then his arms dropped to his sides. The tears came into his eyes. He turned away, shaking his head sorrowfully.

His son—an actor in a theater. His son, with the voice with the cry in it—a voice that could even now chant the prayers and songs that generation after generation had beat upon the hot stones of the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem. A voice that, with his teaching, could crown with glory all the five generations of the Rabinowitz Cantors. He sat down heavily on the hard bench, his body swaying backward and forward, his hands clenched on his breast. Sackcloth and ashes on his bowed head. Mourning and suffering in his heart.

CHAPTER II

The Smouldering Flame

For several seconds Jakie stood silently regarding the bent figure of his father. He realized, young as he was, that he had severely wounded "the papa"—had struck with a knife that twisted brutally in the old man's heart. But with the logic of the Ghetto child, reared amid the cruelty of the city streets, old even in his youngness, he had formulated only one idea; had come to hold only one tenet—state your cause, choose your side, and fight for it. And so, in this instance, he had followed his philosophy; he knew what he wanted, and get it he would.

Awkwardly, as though fearful of disturbing a sleeper, the boy tiptoed over to the benches and picked up his cap. He opened the door softly, looking back on the aged figure on the bench and, as it did not move, stole out into the cool hallway and down the steps to the street. He gazed up and down the bustling thoroughfare and took a deep breath, as though throwing all his cares and sorrows to the wind. Then, with eager, hurrying steps he bolted through the crowds of shoppers, without stop-

ping until he had reached his destination.

At last he halted before a pair of swinging doors, beneath which he could glimpse a number of shifting feet, easing themselves on a fat, brass rail. He could hear the sounds of heavy-bottomed glasses sliding and thudding deftly on a mahogany top. The fetid odor of stale beer, intermingling with the pungent fumes of many cheerful glasses, assailed his nostrils. From the side door, marked "family entrance," issued forth a buxom matron, a small tin bucket in her hand, "rushing the growler." In her wake came the sound of laughing voices and the thrum of a squeaking piano, blatantly shrilling the uneven rhythm of a ragtime tune.

As the sound of the music caught Jakie's ear the boy pushed through the swinging doors and entered the long bar. The mirrors gleamed brightly in the late afternoon sun, reflecting the gayly sparkling glasses lined neatly on their shelves, catching and refracting the medley of glowing colors of piled-high bottles and their contents. Three jovial, German bartenders swapped the news of the day and commented on the events of the hour with their patrons, as they slung the heavy schooners under the taps and back again across the bar.

But Jakie looked neither to right nor left. He threaded his way among the customers and

the hurrying waiters, on toward the "garden" in the rear. He opened the door, stuck his head in and looked about cautiously. Then he advanced to the back of the room where, on a slightly raised platform stood a battered, old piano. Swinging lazily on a stool before the instrument sat a youngish man, heavy-eyed, sallow-complexioned. Now and again he ran his fingers listlessly over the keys, or stopped to remove the half-burned cigarette that dangled from his pale lips and take a swallow from the schooner of beer that decorated one end of the keyboard.

As Jakie wound his way among the tables toward the piano various people spoke to him or smiled, and whispered to their companions. The boy nodded in return, but when he reached the musician he slapped him on the back. The piano player wheeled around and, seeing Jakie, laughed.

"Well, how's the kid Caruso to-day?" the pianist jocularly demanded.

"Great! How's the old kid Paderooski?" Jakie tossed back the approved answer to this airy badinage.

The two laughed together. And a strange pair they made. The one whose every feature proclaimed him a denizen of the night life of the lower East Side; whose face showed the ravages of dissipation and the abuse of his

physical being. The other a child of the Ghetto, learned in the lore of the streets, but clean, shining-eyed, with all life before him. Yet in a few years, playing the same sort of game, the boy might easily become the prototype of the man. Neither of them, however, thought further than the moment before them. And so they laughed.

"Good house this afternoon, kid," exclaimed the pianist, lapsing into the vernacular of the theater. "Y' ought to be able to pick up a couple of bucks."

The boy nodded and looked out over the "house." The tables were well filled and the crowd seemed to be in good humor. Here in one corner sat a rotund German, flanked by his heavy, round-faced wife and three jolly children. Wiener Schnitzel they were eating, and washing it down with long draughts of cool beer. In another corner lolled three bedecked women, faces hard under the heavy make-up of powder and rouge, lip stick and eyebrow pencil, sipping port wine. At another table sat a young Jewish boy and his sweetheart, so absorbed in each other that their sandwiches were forgotten and their wine grew warm with standing. And many more of the same ilk Jakie saw. And Jakie whispered to the pianist.

At a nod from the boy the musician struck up

the opening chords of "Mighty Lak a Rose." In clear, unerring tones Jakie took up the air. Now with the resonance of a bell, now crooning softly, the child's voice swept through the room. The rotund German beat time with his hand on the table, nodding his head the while. The young Jewish boy reached out a shy hand toward his girl. One of the three women yawned and tapped heavily jeweled fingers on the bare table boards. But Jakie saw nothing. He was singing—singing! And he poured out his soul in the tender words—words that meant little more to him than the expression of his love for song.

"Dot vas gut music, hein, mama?" the German smiled at his Frau. "Hans, you should die violin practice more," he turned in severity on a chubby boy at his side who munched his food silently.

"Ain't that sweet," murmured one of the gaudy ladies, reaching into a huge, gold mesh bag and rolling a quarter across the floor toward the younger singer.

"Aw, let's have somethin' a little more lively," suggested the lady with the Bird of Paradise on her hat. But she, too, threw out some coins.

Across the floor, silver of various denominations scuttled, waking Jakie from his reverie. Their clinking sounds called him, and he ran

about the room gathering up the offering and stuffing it into his trousers pocket.

"Thanks, ladies," he called to the trio. "Gee, thanks," he waved to the young Jewish gentleman. "Thanks! Thanks!" he nodded right and left.

He retired to the platform once more and took council with the pianist. He withdrew his handful of coins from his pocket and laid them out in little piles on the end of the piano. He counted them carefully, and then returned them to their hiding place. The pianist lighted a fresh cigarette and beckoned the waiter.

"What'll it be, Caruso," he demanded of the young singer as the waiter hurried forward to attend to the wants of the musicians. "This 'uns on me."

"Lemonade for me, George," Jakie turned with a sophisticated air toward his friend.

"Aw, 'at's baby stuff," commented George, laughing.

"Well, I got to take care of my voice, ain't I?" demanded the singer. "Ain't you told me yourself 'at's how Micky Gallagher ruint his voice—too much likker?"

"You're right, kid," acknowledged George. "Micky would of been headlinin' on Broadway to-day, 'stead of gatherin' in a couple of thin shekels down to Mulligan's Place, if he'd a treated his t'roat decent. Yeh, you got the

right idea, kid. Stick to th' lemonade and maybe you'll be on Broadway. Lemonade an' a beer, Jim," the pianist turned to give the order to the waiter, who hurried off toward the bar.

"Whatcha gonna do wit all th' mazuma, kid?" queried George, puffing languidly on his cigarette.

"I got it all put away. I'm saving it, see," responded Jakie. "Got fifteen dollars now," he added proudly.

"Yeh! Good fer you, kid. You're O. K."

"Sure, 'cause I got to have some capital to start on, see, if I want to be a singer in a theayter. I told papa to-day I didn't want to be no Cantor."

"Say, did ya? What'd he say?"

"Aw, he got sore. I thought maybe he was going to beat me—but he didn't. If he had of, I'd have run away, sure."

"Gee, kid, 'at's too bad. Why won't yer papa let ya sing in a theayter?"

"Well, he says 'at all the Rabinowitzes has been Cantors, see, and he's teaching me to be one. But I says: 'Papa,' I says, 'I don't want to be no Cantor,' see, I says, 'I want to sing in a theayter'; and then he turned on the weeps, and I beat it down here, see."

The waiter returned now with the beer and lemonade, and the two musicians lifted their glasses.

"Prosit!" proclaimed George briefly, touching his glass to the child's.

And: "Sköal!" returned Jakie, lifting the lemonade to his lips. The two drank gravely.

"Well, what'll it be this time, kid?" George asked, setting his glass down on the piano edge and wiping his mouth across the back of his hand.

"Let's give 'em something lively—some ragtime," decided the singer.

"Sure," acquiesced the pianist, and, with his half consumed cigarette still dangling from his lips, he ran his fingers over the keys and began to vamp the opening bars of "'N Everything."

The childish voice took up the verse.

"I'm as nutty as a squirr'l
Cause I've got myself a girl who keeps
me scheming
And dreaming all day long——"

The throbbing music whined in ragged time. The tinny piano vibrated in uneven rhythm. The gaudy ladies tapped with the toes of their slippers and laughed. The old German beat a rat-a-tat-tat on the table. The young Jewish gentleman and his girl giggled and began to eat their sandwiches. Glasses clinked; silverware clattered; waiters flat-footed it in time to the music.

But Jakie—Jakie was no longer a Rabinowitz. Now he was out in front, doing his stuff. He threw out his hands in abandon. His voice sobbed; lilted; caught and sobbed again. The voice with the cry in it—the cry from the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem.

"She's got a pair of eyes that speak of love 'n' everything
She's got a smile like angels up above 'n' everything——"

Forgotten was the Synagogue; forgotten were the teachings of his fathers; forgotten everything, save that as he swayed, his audience swayed with him; save that as he moved, his audience moved, too.

Outside, at the bar, the customers turned, put down their glasses, and listened. The kid was good, they nodded, exchanging glances.

At that moment the swinging doors opened to admit a tall, spare Hebrew, of gangling gait and pleasant, though gauntly eager countenance. His cutaway coat proclaimed him a man of affairs in business, and his straggly beard and the set of his flat, derby hat would have announced to even the most unsuspecting his religion and his habitat. He nodded a greeting to several of the bystanders.

"Glas helles," Moisha Yudelson requested

gravely of one of the bartenders, reaching into his pocket and pulling forth a five cent piece, which he deposited carefully on the counter.

The beer came up foaming; slid across the bar to the clang of the cash register. Yudelson reached over the free lunch counter and made a sandwich of crackers and cheese, augmented by a pickle, which he masticated slowly. As he stood there the strains of the music floated out once more across the bar room.

"And if she'll be my little wife, we'll lead
the simple life,
And we'll raise a lot of ducks and cows and
geese and everything."

He could hear the vibrant voice of the young singer.

Yudelson listened, curious at first, and then attentively. The voice was certainly familiar. He frowned. Then he started toward the entrance to the "garden," his beer in one hand, sandwich in the other. He pushed the door open just as Jakie made his last plea. Yudelson's eyes bulged with astonishment. He crammed the remainder of the sandwich into his mouth and gulped his beer. Then his lips tightened. He hurried back to the counter, deposited his glass, and bolted for the door.

Back in the "garden" the tables pounded

out their applause. The burst of noise, the chink of coins, once more brought Jakie back to the realms of reality. He ran about, gathering up the money, nodding his thanks. Pocketing his pay he returned to the platform.

"Kid, you're O. K." George shook hands with his small partner. "Will we give 'em an encore?"

"Sure," Jakie responded, counting his coins again. "What'll it be?"

"What d'ya say?"

"Well, how about 'Darktown Strutters' Ball?' "

George engulfed himself in a deep draught of beer and began to tickle the ivories.

CHAPTER III

His First Flight

The Cantor paced the floor of the Rabinowitz apartment nervously. His strident footfalls shook the boards of the old house until the china in the glass-fronted closet trembled like leaves before an approaching storm. The massive, antique furniture looked gloomily foreboding in the fast-falling gloaming, and the silver on the heavy sideboard deepened to purple in the refracted light that clung for a moment to the Synagogue windows and then passed on and wended its way into the room. Once the Cantor stopped before a crayon portrait of an elderly Jew with skull cap and flowing beard, and shook his head sadly, and sighed.

"Nu, papa, you shouldn't yourself worry so," Sara Rabinowitz bustled in from the dining room quietly, a little timorously, even, and began sorting clean linen from the sideboard drawers for the table.

"Oi, oi," moaned the Cantor. "For why I shouldn't worry? For Jakie because he should be a singer in a theayter yet. A Rabinowitz an actor in a theayter! Oi, Oi!"

Mrs. Rabinowitz kept her silence. A sweet-faced motherly woman, warm from her exertions in the kitchen, for she was preparing the feast for the eve of Atonement Day, after which there would be twenty-four hours of fasting. Her wig had slipped a little to one side, giving her a slightly rakish air, and showed wisps of gray hair underneath. She stood somewhat in awe of her husband, even though she realized the kindliness that lay beneath his stern exterior. Her greatest love, however, was lavished on Jakie, and for him she would have braved any storm of wrath. But she knew that with the Cantor in his present humor, she had best allow him his own way.

"Just wait! I show him," the Cantor shook his fist. "An actor, so? I teach him to listen to his papa!"

"Nu, nu, Yosele," Mrs. Rabinowitz settled her Orthodox wig and smoothed down her voluminous apron. "Jakie is a good boy—but maybe he shouldn't be a Cantor."

"What! Not a Cantor! You should say this! A misse meshine os dir!" The Cantor brought his fist down on the sideboard with a bang that almost shook the cut glass from its resting place. "I make Jakie a Cantor like me—like his papa; like my papa and like his papa," he pointed to the crayon portrait.

Mrs. Rabinowitz nodded silently.

"Already he knows the songs and prayers, even so good as I do." The Cantor drew himself up proudly. "He could take my place yet to-night and sing 'Kol Nidre' when Yom Kippur begins."

Mrs. Rabinowitz smiled acquiescence, but her eyes were troubled. She might not have been as learned in the lore of her race as was her husband, but she had a deeper and better understanding of life—and Jakie.

"He has it all in the head, yes," she spoke slowly, "but it is not in the heart, papa. He is of America."

The Cantor stared at his wife, incredulous. Twice this day now the members of his family had defied his authority; had set aside as naught the dearest wishes of his heart. He walked the floor excitedly, muttering imprecations in Yiddish against the thanklessness of children, the insubordination of woman, and the pain of thwarted ambitions.

Mrs. Rabinowitz, cowed by the storm her words seemed to have created, hurried busily out into the dining room, her arms filled with linen and silverware. She waddled silently about her tasks, making as little noise as possible for fear of again offending her husband.

"Mama, mama!" Cantor Rabinowitz called impatiently. "You know where is Jakie?"

"No, papa," she answered, stopping in the doorway, a big brass chopping bowl filling her arms. "He is maybe playing with the boys."

"So!" The Cantor pulled a great silver watch from his pocket, held it close to his eyes to see the time, and snapped it shut. "To-night Jakie sings 'Kol Nidre' in the School, and already he don't come yet."

"He don't know what it is the time, papa," Mrs. Rabinowitz coaxed. "And the supper ain't yet ready."

"Humph!" The Cantor sniffed disdainfully. "Shouldn't he don't come now in a minute he starts his Yom Kippur fasting without no supper."

Mrs. Rabinowitz went back to her kitchen with an anxious heart. At every footfall, every noise, she jumped, hoping against hope that it might signal the approach of her son. If he would only come now "the papa" would soon forget his anger and peace would reign once more in the household. At last there came a knock. Mrs. Rabinowitz hurried to the door and threw it open. But there, to her surprise, instead of the expected child, stood Moisha Yudelson.

"Good evening, Mrs. Rabinowitz. The Cantor is he home?" began Yudelson, stepping into the room.

"Good evening, Mr. Yudelson. Come in. Yosele!" Mrs. Rabinowitz called her husband to attention. "It's Mr. Yudelson."

"Good evening, Yudelson," the Cantor turned to shake hands with his friend.

"Cantor, good evening," Yudelson answered.

"Sit down, Mr. Yudelson, sit down." Mrs. Rabinowitz fluttered about, dusting off the morris chair with her apron. "It's a pleasure we should see you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Rabinowitz, but I just come to—ahem," Yudelson cleared his throat nervously. "Of course, it ain't any of mine bizness, but I say to myself, it's mine duty——" he floundered, scarcely knowing how to break the news.

"Yes, yes, Yudelson, you come to say?" the Cantor prodded the delinquent speaker.

"I feel I should speak to you from this, Cantor," Yudelson began again. "It's from Jakie."

"Oi, oi, has happened something," Mrs. Rabinowitz wailed.

"Nein, nein, Mrs. Rabinowitz, it ain't that," comforted Yudelson. "It's I'm by Muller's Café for the beer, so hot it is by the store, and so soon I'm drinking mine beer I hear by der garten music, and I say to myself: 'So, is by Jakie Rabinowitz such a voice; I should take a

look.' I take a look and is the true. Is singing ragtime Jakie by der garten."

"Oi, weh is mir!" the Cantor exploded. "I fix him. Ragtime he sings. So!" The Cantor reached for his hat and started for the door.

"Papa, papa! Don't!" Mrs. Rabinowitz wailed.

"Of course, it ain't any of mine bizness," Yudelson was becoming frightened by the disturbance he had created. But the Cantor had already slammed the door.

Mrs. Rabinowitz stood wringing her hands helplessly.

"Oi, oi, Mr. Yudelson," she moaned. "For why you should tell the Cantor this—and tonight! Is enough you should attend your own bizness, and leave my Jakie alone."

She sank back into a big chair and buried her face in her apron.

"You excuse me, Mrs. Rabinowitz," Yudelson fumbled for words. "I—I go by the store."

He settled his hat more firmly on his head and let himself out quietly. Once on the street he looked down toward the Café. He could just make out the hurrying figure of the Cantor, who was brushing aside the shopping crowds, scattering them like chaff before a wind. Yudelson shook his head, slightly puzzled. He hadn't meant any harm, actually. He only felt that he was serving the Cantor's interests, and

he was devoted to his friend. But it seemed as though he had stirred up trouble by acting out of the goodness of his heart. He wandered slowly toward his jewelry shop.

The Cantor by this time had reached the family entrance of the Café. He could hear the strains of the jazz music and the voice of his son. He pushed the door open violently, and stood there for a moment surveying the scene. There was Jakie, his arms outstretched, his voice crying as his father had taught him to make it cry, but the words were not those of the Synogogue.

"I wanna dance out both my shoes
When they play those Jelly Roll Blues——"

Jakie had warmed up to his work. His eyes were rolling. He was giving as good a presentation of the "Strutters' Ball" as any actor on Broadway. But as he leaned forward toward his audience the vast bulk of his father loomed ominously before him. The child caught his breath and stopped, staring. Slowly he drew back, but the Cantor reached forth a long arm and caught him by the coat collar in a vise-like grip. With the squirming figure of the child the old man made his way to the door. The spectators looked on, amused at this unexpected bit of comedy. As the two disap-

peared everyone laughed, and the pianist struck up with "They always, always pick on me."

Up the street went the two figures, the Cantor firmly grasping Jakie's arm. Neither spoke. There was no need for words. The boy knew exactly what was about to happen, and he knew that his father knew that he knew. Jakie felt only sorrow for "the mama." It always hurt her so to see her son punished. Even now she was sitting anxiously awaiting the first sound that would announce the presence of the two. She dried her eyes but they *would* fill again with tears. The dishes were getting cold, and she set them back on the stove to warm them.

But at last they were home, and "the mama" was rushing to meet them. She threw open the door and the Cantor thrust Jakie ahead of him into the room. The boy tried to break away, but the irate father held him all the closer.

"Jakie! Jakie!" Mrs. Rabinowitz called, holding out her arms to the child.

"Nu, nu, mama, you will please leave this to me." The Cantor motioned his wife away with an austere gesture. "Singing nigger songs by a beer garden yet!" he shook the boy roughly. "You bummer! You no-good lowlife! I fix you!"

"Papa, you shouldn't!" Mrs. Rabinowitz seized her husband's arm, but he thrust her aside.

He pushed the boy before him toward the bedroom door.

"I teach him he should never again use his voice for such low things."

"But, Yosele, he don't mean bad," Mrs. Rabinowitz still pleaded. "It don't do no good to whip him."

"Mama, I tell you once for all I should teach him to be a Cantor in a Synagogue; not a low-life actor in a theayter."

"It makes no good, papa," Mrs. Rabinowitz implored, "and so soon Yom Kippur begins he must be ready for the School."

"I tell you, no, mama," the Cantor faced about determinedly and started to march the boy off to his punishment.

But Jakie wiggled about, quite as determined as his father. There was something akin in their moods of that moment. Each was bent on upholding his end of the argument; each believed firmly in his belief; each was as determined as the other to see the thing through.

"I told you before if you whip me again, I'll run away," Jakie announced doggedly, "and I'll never come back,."

"Oi! Du schagitz! Du undankbarer!" The Cantor caught the boy by the shoulders and

thrust him into the bedroom. He seized a strap, hung conveniently from a nail on the wall, and banged the door after him.

As the door shut in her face, Mrs. Rabinowitz stopped. She clenched her hands in terror. Jakie had threatened before to run away from his father's beatings—and Jakie was not the little boy he had been only a few short years before. He was getting to the point where he resented the autocratic rule which admitted of no questioning of the patriarchal law. She realized that it might be this time—or the next—or the next. But Jakie would go. Then she heard the smart swish of the strap and a smothered cry. She put her hands over her ears to shut out the sound, and went back to her chair, weeping.

Suddenly the door of the bedroom opened and Jakie rushed out, his eyes swollen and red, his body trembling. He ran to his mother and kissed her impulsively, but even as her restraining arms reached out to comfort him, he eluded their hold, threw open the door and made his way quickly to the street.

The Cantor emerged a little breathless, a little dazed. He looked at his wife. Then he pulled out his watch.

"It is time for the services, mama," he said, turning to the wall behind him where hung the prayer shawl and the freshly washed and ironed

robe of the Cantor of "Kol Nidre." With great deliberation he adjusted the robe, kissed the mazuzah, and made his way toward the Synagogue next door, meekly followed by his wife.

Every pew downstairs was filled with men. The Cantor walked up the aisle toward the raised platform where his choir boys were taking their places. Mrs. Rabinowitz climbed the narrow stairs to the balcony and found her seat among the women. She tried to dry her eyes, but the tears persisted, and she moaned softly to herself. From where she sat she could see her husband and the choir boys, but there was no Jakie there now. Nor perhaps ever would be. She saw the Cantor speak to the Rabbi; adjust his prayer shawl, and then take his position on the platform. The congregation stilled; waited on its God. Then,

"Kol Nidre v'e sore ush' wue vach'rome
v'konome v'kinuse, v'chinuye
V'kinuse, v'chinuye, ush' vue, vach'rome,
v'konome—"

The first notes of the "Kol Nidre" trailed slowly over the heads of the congregation and hung hauntingly in the corners of the room. Louder, higher grew the wailing minor, grieving for the grief of vows false to the faith,

promises made and oaths once sworn. The congregation stirred. Never had the Cantor's voice rung out so strong and clear; never had the breaking cry been so heart-rending.

Now one by one the women in the balcony began to sway from side to side, moving to the rhythmic beat of the age-old chant. Slowly, in unison, held spellbound, like the great arm of some huge mechanism they seemed, as the lament swept full and powerful upwards; cried the cry of atonement. And among them sat a lonely figure with bowed head, weeping.

CHAPTER IV

Time, Like a Rolling Stream

Deep cañons with their countless, brooding greens lay lazily staring up at the brown of the California hills, the black of the mountain tops. The orange vermilion of fragile poppies gleamed high on the ridges. In the distance the broad stretch of San Francisco Bay, outlined by the slow-rising elevations of land upon which floated a specter-white city, just barely revealed itself through the mist. The Golden Gate with the changing blue and orange hills dropping down as though to meet the caresses of the lapping waters, spread in further vista. White steamers sent trailing clouds of silver smoke across the horizon, and disappeared between the reaching arms of the land.

But the listless group of people cooling their heels in the reception room of the Star Vaudeville Circuit, San Francisco Branch offices, showed no particular interest in the vagaries of nature. They stirred apathetically now and again, glancing incuriously at each other. Their interest was roused only when a new figure appeared, and then they appraised it with cold, critical and not very commending

A Warner Bros. Production. *The Jazz Singer.*

'A RABINOWITZ HAD ALWAYS BEEN THE CANTOR IN THE ORCHARD STREET SYNAGOGUE.

eyes; or when a buzzer called from the inner office. And then women dabbed frantically with powder and lipstick, and men straightened their ties and smoothed their hair.

They had been sitting in these same chairs, most of them, since early morning, each anxious in the hope of being able to get in to see the booking manager. For on him depended their vaudeville engagements, their itineraries, and, more or less, the length of their run. Some waited for try-outs, a chance to show their acts; others came on the speculation that they might fill in for some act already booked, but dropped either because of its inability to get over, or through illness or failure of some one of the participants to appear; still others just waited patiently for a booking.

Each one had been told in turn by a pert and impertinent office boy that: "Mr. Schuler's in con'frence." Stolidly they had turned away from the gate more carefully guarded by the weazened youth than the throne of Pluto by Cerberus. This diminutive St. Peter now lolled back in his swivel chair, his feet propped up on the desk before him, superciliously surveying the scene.

The chubby man in the corner, who looked as though he might be a low comedian in a burlesque show, turned another page of "Variety" and completely immersed himself in the latest

theatrical news of the country. A jaded blonde, with hard lines around her mouth, and a heavy make-up, yawned, crossed her legs, and revealed several additional inches of silk stocking that stretched tightly over the muscular limbs that proclaimed her a dancer. Her partner, a dapper youth with slick, black hair, unwound himself and stretched.

A fresh-complexioned, brown-haired girl, waiting for a vocal tryout, smiled lonesomely at a lanky stage child heavily chaperoned by an overfed and bedizened mother. Three short, swarthy men whose trousers were too short and whose coats refused to conceal their bulging muscles, and who looked as though at any moment they might leap forward and shout: "Allez Oop!" simultaneously pulled three handkerchiefs from three pockets, mopped three moist brows, and simultaneously replaced the three kerchiefs.

Now the door opened to admit a heavy blonde of uncertain age. She swished 'cross the floor, black lace draperies fluttering and left behind a trail of heady perfume. All eyes turned to follow in her wake. The callow youth leaped up to bar the gate.

"I want to see Mr. Schuler," demanded the buxom beauty in a throaty voice. "An' make it snappy, bo."

"Mr. Schuler's in con'frence and can't be

disturbed," the boy began his usual formula.

"Is that so!" The blonde reached out a hefty arm and swept the boy to one side. "Not to me he ain't." Without stopping to knock she threw open the door to the inner sanctum and disappeared, banging it behind her.

The boy stared open-mouthed. The waiters glared hopelessly, wonderingly. The boy watched after the departed figure for a moment, then shrugged his shoulders and sat down. He pulled a piece of paper from the desk drawer, inserted it in the typewriter before him, and languidly hammered the keys. "Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party," he wrote over and over again. Silence, save for the click-click of the machine, brooded once more over the room.

A very obvious Actor—spelled with a capital A—ran a lean hand through his Shakespearean locks, flicked a speck of dust from his too-many-times-pressed suit, and shook his head. A pair of pretty twins in short, organdie dresses, who had arrived some hours before giggling irrepressibly, settled down once more to face stern reality and resume their haggling over a cross word puzzle. A young man, slightly pudgy, with a suit that had once been well tailored but which now showed the effects of travel—and not particularly de luxe travel—decided to snatch forty winks of sleep betimes.

Again the door opened, this time to admit a personable young man, obviously down on his luck. It was evident that he had made an attempt at spruceness, but his turned cuffs, his cheap tie, and his shiny suit told their own story. He paused, gazing irresolutely about the room, and then hesitatingly walked to the railing in front of the desk. The office boy assumed a greater interest in his work, not deigning to glance at the new arrival. The applicant cleared his throat nervously.

"I—I'd like to see Mr. Schuler, please," he began.

"Can't be done," snapped the boy, not lifting his eyes from his work. "He's in a important con'frence."

The young man turned slowly and swallowed a lump in his throat. It was just another turndown, and he should be getting used to them by this time, he thought. But even ten years of hunting jobs had not quite hardened his sensibilities. Ten long years and three thousand miles of weary travel from the Ghetto could work many changes, however—and had. It was a long jump from Jakie Rabinowitz to Jack Robin and it had taken the ten years and three thousand miles to make the jump. And so the little Jakie Rabinowitz that was swallowed hard, and the Jack Robin of the now looked about for a chair in the Star Vaude-

ville Circuit, San Francisco Branch offices.

The pudgy, not-so-well-dressed young man, had been staring at the newcomer. And now, as Jack Robin turned, the man jumped up from his chair and held out his hand.

"Well, if it ain't my old partner from the sticks," the pudgy man was laughing and pumping Jack's hand up and down with tremendous gusto.

"Buster Billings! Well, what th'—what are you doing here?" Jack grasped his friend's hand with an equal heartiness.

"Same thing you are. Huntin' a bookin'. How'd you get here?" he demanded.

"Long story, Buster," Jack returned. "Gee, it's great seeing you again. Let me see. Last time I saw you, you were getting ready to climb a side door Pullman out of Cheyenne."

"Yeh, that's right," Buster laughed at the memory. "Ran onto a streak of hard luck down in Texas after that, and walked the ties for a while. Then I found an ol' pal puttin' on a song an' dance act out in Albuquerque an' he put me wise to a joint, 'Shiverin' Sal's Place' —ever hear of it?"

Jack shook his head.

"Some joint, believe you me," Buster continued. "But I got a work-out there, an' they took me on for a comedy monologue in the cabaret. I got my notices all right an' a good

break but I was itchin' for 'Frisco, an' soon's I got enough jack ahead I beat it. Spent most of it playin' Seven-Up on the train, though," he added laughing. "Where've you been?"

"Well, let's see," Jack began. "I had a couple more weeks after you left, and then I was out. I got a job singing 'mammy' songs in a café, but it didn't go over so big. About that time I decided I'd better move on, so I hopped a train for Santa Fe. Thought I might get some kind of a booking there, but—nothing stirring. I got lots of promises, but I couldn't eat them. Money ran out—well, you know that story."

Buster nodded sympathetically.

"I sure do," he grinned.

"Well, anyhow, I started to walk. I wanted to make 'Frisco myself, but I landed in Phoenix."

"Great little town—not!" Buster interrupted.

"Oh, I got a job there, anyhow," Jack went on. "One of these night life places where there was plenty of night and not so much life. But I caught up with a little money, and then the place went bust. I took to tramping the streets again, but it was coming summer and there wasn't a thing to be had any place. I lasted through, but I was on my uppers by fall. Just

about that time I heard of a show that was going out."

"Pretty tough, kid," Buster commented.

"Well, to make a long story short I got hold of the manager and he talked cold turkey," Jack explained, "and after a week's rehearsal we headed for the sticks—and when I say sticks I don't mean maybe. I think we played every town hall in Arizona, Utah and Nevada. And how!"

"Don't," groaned Buster. "I know. I've been there myself, an' I hate to be remembered of them little unpleasant things. Ever strike Escalante, Nevada?"

"Did I!" Jack nodded sorrowfully. "What a town. There were three people in the audience, and not one of them cracked a smile."

"An' the Edwards House! What a joint! Did you stay there?"

"Did we stay there! Say, all we did was sleep when we could on the trains—and no sleepers for our outfit. We sat up."

"Oh, well, it's all in the game," Buster philosophized.

"Sure," Jack agreed. "Well, anyhow, we finally got as far as Sweetwater, Nevada, and the winter was pretty near gone. And I thought I was in luck, even though I'd only been getting thirty a week and pay my own expenses, I'd managed to keep the job going.

But as I started to say, we got to Sweetwater, and our next jump was Calder, Cal. We got on the train that night—or about two in the morning. No one looked around for the manager—he wasn't so popular, anyhow, and when we woke up in Calder the boy friend was minus."

"Skipped?" Buster questioned laconically.

"Sure, and it was Saturday and pay day. He just beat it and left the whole C.O. flat. Stranded! And how! Well, we didn't have any scenery—nothing but a back drop, and nothing to hock. So we had to get out the best way we could. I headed for 'Frisco. Picked up some lifts along the way and some meals from farmhouses, and landed in here yesterday. Say, think there's a chance of anything doing here?"

Buster shook his head wearily.

"I been comin' over here the last four days an' this guy ain't seen no one yet."

"That's not so hot," Jack commented.

The pair sat in silence for a time.

"O, by the way, there's a friend of yours playin' here," Buster smiled slyly.

"Friend of mine? Who?" Jack asked, coming to with a start.

"Mary Dale."

Jack colored and looked out of the window.

"Well, she's not exactly a friend of mine—

as a matter of fact I don't even know her. Never met her, even."

"Well, if I remember," Buster began.

"O, I used to catch her act in Cheyenne after ours. They had a good spot on the bill," Jack admitted shyly. "And I admire her work. She's going to make good, and don't you forget it."

"Sure. She's a great little kid."

"Where are they playing?"

"Orpheum."

"How did the act go over here?"

"Swell notices. Mary got a couple of lines on the Flame Dance of hers."

"That always was a good number."

"Sure. What I always say is she'd ought to get some good, original stuff, an' then——"

Buster's theories were interrupted by the sound of a buzzer. The waiting group looked expectantly toward the inner office. The office boy jumped to his feet and hurried in. In a few moments he returned and cast a disparaging glance over the room.

"Th' boss ain't seein' nobody else to-day," he barked. "You can all duck." He returned to his desk and began covering his typewriter.

The applicants looked wearily from one to another, and just as wearily arose and began filing out. Buster and Jack followed the example of the others.

"Where to," Jack turned to his friend.

"Hungry, kid?"

"Well, I haven't any money, and——"

"Go ahead. You haven't eat for a couple a days, either, have you?"

"No, nothing but some sandwiches," Jack shut his teeth with a little click.

"Well, I'll tell you what, kid. I got an ol' side kick down to 'Coffee Dan's.' I ain't got no money, either. But Frank'll stake us to somethin'. We can bum some kind of a feed. An' you'd better get somethin' inside you."

"That listens good to me, Buster."

They started for the elevator and soon they were on the street. A mist was settling down and in the forced gloaming a gray green light was seeping through a rent in the fog banks, throwing into high relief the Purido hills and the rolling steppes of Marin county.

CHAPTER V

Disturbing Bliss

The lights in the Orpheum Theater snapped off, and the matinee crowds threaded their way to the street, standing in clusters, blocking passages, signaling street cars, wending their various ways up and down the street. From the stage entrance came groups of twos and threes, chatting, laughing, arguing. A small, lithe figure appeared, dressed in a severely cut suit of black and white pin stripe. A smartly tailored hat allowed the escape of golden-yellow tendrils of hair that curled back enticingly over the rolled brim of the headpiece.

The girl stood drawing on her gloves and gazed dreamily out toward the bay. The Tamalpas towered to the north; the Golden Gate lay straight ahead, and to the south she could catch a glimpse of the Purido Hills. Far out on the soft bosom of the ocean there just barely showed the black dots which are the Farallones. The soft, pastel shades of the sunset merged into a rainbow of color and caught themselves reflected in the still waters of the bay and the mirror that is called Pacific.

Mary Dale of the "Little Follies" act turned

to look back at the stage door as it opened to emit a tall, dark girl and a slender young man. The pair hurried along the alleyway and stopped when they reached the dancer.

"Where'll we eat?" questioned Ben Thorpe, the song and dance man of the "Little Follies."

"Oh, any old place. How about Springers?" Estelle Morton, member of the "Little Follies" chorus, suggested.

"Too high hat," commented Mr. Thorpe. "Where d'you want to go, Mary?"

"Any place suits me," Mary shrugged her shoulders. "I just want to get back in time to run over that new number to-night before we go on."

"How about 'Coffee Dan's,' then," suggested Ben, turning to the two girls. "Food's good, and there's always some entertainment there. Might pick up some ideas."

"All right," both girls assented.

The three sauntered down the street, talking until they reached the café. Once inside they found a table, sat down and began ordering. Then they glanced about the room, picking out familiar faces, nodding to fellow performers, commenting on the general activities of the place.

The room was crowded with a heterogeneous mob of people. Women in low-cut evening gowns, jewels sparkling, accompanied by men

in evening clothes, filled a number of the tables. Show people hurrying through dinner to make the theater by seven-thirty or eight o'clock occupied other tables. Rough, questionable looking characters gathered in little knots at still other tables. Waiters dashed back and forth, trays heavily laden, and usually with ham and eggs, the piece de resistance of a "Coffee Dan" meal.

All about there was an air of jollity. Loud conversation buzzed in the air, and shrilled even louder when the pianist on a platform at the rear of the room struck up the latest jazz tunes. At a small table to the left of the platform sat Jack Robin and Buster Billings, both heavily engaged in the absorption of a square meal. But at last they sat back, satiated, and a waiter brought them coffee. Frank, the pianist, tossed a package of cigarettes in their direction.

"Well, just one to celebrate," laughed Jack, as Buster proffered the borrowed pack.

"It's just as good you don't smoke," Buster struck a match and applied it to Jack's cigarette and then to his own. "Because, when you go bust, you get an awful cravin' for a smoke —an' try an' get one."

"No, I can always remember about when I was a kid the pianist—what was his name? Oh, yes, George. George, down at Muller's Café where I first started, told me about a guy who'd of been on Broadway if he hadn't hit liquor

and cigarettes too hard and ruined his voice."

"Yeh? Well, I ain't got no voice, so I should worry," Buster grinned.

The two smoked in silence, drinking their coffee with an evident relish.

"How d'you like it, kid?" Buster waved an arm airily, as though to include the entire room.

"Pretty swell," Jack concluded, after gazing about. "And *some* food! Whew! That's the best meal I've had in a year."

"You said it!" Buster sighed luxuriously.

They both turned to look at Frank approvingly, and he smiled down on them, and then, winking to Buster, walked out to the edge of the platform. He leaned over and pounded on a table with a wooden mallet.

"Hey, folks!" he called out, trying to silence the din. "Quiet!" He rapped on the table again.

Little by little the noise died down, and the diners faced about. Jack and Buster pushed their plates back and turned sidewise in their chairs to get a better view of the proceedings. Frank raised his hand for complete silence.

"I got a little announcement to make, folks," he called. "How about a little entertainment?"

The announcement was greeted with applause and the banging of knives and forks against glasses.

"We got a little talent in the house to-night, folks," he continued, "an' maybe with a little coöperation we can have a little song."

The applause broke out again.

"An' now I'm going to introduce Mr. Jack Robin, the famous tenor from Petaluma. An' I'm going to ask Mr. Jack Robin to sing you a little song. How about it, folks?"

The applause came stronger than ever, although no one there had ever heard of Jack Robin. But everyone was willing to try anything once, and these impromptu entertainments were a feature of "Coffee Dan's."

At the mention of his name Jack gasped, and then shrank back in his chair. But Frank was turning toward him and motioning him to the platform. He signaled to the pianist and shook his head, embarrassed.

"Mr. Jack Robin," Frank was announcing.

"I can't, Buster. Tell him I can't," Jack was pleading.

"Oh, go ahead and be a good kid." Buster was shoving his unwilling companion toward the platform. "Go on, kid. Be a sport. Everybody does somethin' here. Give 'em somethin' good. Why, even the opera stars sing here. Go on, give 'em 'Top of the World.' Frank knows it."

Buster had, by this time, pushed Jack to the platform and Frank was extending his hand to

pull the singer up beside him. Jack straightened his coat and cleared his throat.

"What'll it be, Jack," Frank asked.

"Do you know 'I'm Sitting on Top of the World'?" Jack asked.

"Sure. Folks, Mr. Jack Robin will sing that little song entitled 'I'm Sitting on Top of the World.' How about it!"

Frank turned to the piano and began to vamp the introduction. As he heard the first bars of the music his nervousness left him, and Jack looked over his audience and smiled. The smile caught—a cheerful smile with the magnetism of personality that reached out and caused the diners in the café to stop and listen.

"I'm Sitting on Top of the World
Just rollin' along, and
singin' a song——"

Jack began the chorus. It was the voice of Jakie Rabinowitz—the voice with the cry in it. But it was a voice that had deepened and enriched itself, until now it might have measured with the voice of Cantor Rabinowitz and lost not one iota in the measuring.

As the voice rolled out Mary Dale turned to stare in wide-eyed amazement. She saw a good looking young man in shabby clothes singing with the voice of an angel. There was a new

quality to his expression, a vivid force that ran like currents of electricity transmitting themselves into the heart of the listener.

"Just rollin' along,
And singin' a song——"

Jack flung himself forward, as had the Jakie in the old days. But as he looked out at his audience his eyes caught those of the girl as though by some uncanny attraction. He gulped, faltered for a second, but he was of the theater, and quickly he caught himself and continued the song. But he could not take his eyes from the girl.

"Who's your friend, Mary," Ben Thorpe asked jocularly, noticing the obvious manner in which the two were staring at each other.

Mary crimsoned, and then the pink trailed down her face leaving the white skin whiter by contrast.

"Sh-h-h!" she commanded. "I don't know."

The song came to a close and scarcely had the last notes died away when the diners began thundering their appreciation with calls and claps and hammering silverware. Frank jumped up from his stool and shook Jack's hand.

"Great number, kid," he whispered, and then pushed Jack forward to take his bows.

But Jack was already hurrying from the platform as though frightened by his own success. And Buster was slapping him heartily on the back and trying to push him toward the platform again. Jack laughingly slipped into his seat and shook his head. Almost immediately his eyes sought those of the girl, but she seemed absorbed in her friends. But what she was actually doing was talking about the singer.

"I tell you that's a marvelous voice," she was saying.

"Not so bad," Ben approved.

"Well, I'm going to tell Berg about him," Mary went on. "Why with a voice like that he ought to be able to do something very worth while. I wonder what he's doing now?"

"Never heard of him," Estelle answered. "But he certainly tumbled when he looked at you, babe."

Mary turned away, not particularly anxious to discuss this phase of affairs. And as she turned she glanced toward Jack's table. Then her face lighted up, and she smiled and bowed.

"Why, there's Buster Billings, and he's with Jack Robin. Don't you remember—Buster was on the same bill with us in Seattle," Mary turned to Estelle and Ben. "He had a monologue."

"You never told me you knew her," Jack was accusing Buster.

"You never asked me," Buster laughed. "Sure, I know them. We was on the same bill in Seattle and Spokane. I'm going over and say 'Hello.' "

He rose, and Jack started to rise, too, but subsided into his chair again, feeling that he did not wish to force an introduction unless Mary were willing.

"Hello, Mary," Buster was shaking hands with the dancer.

"Well, Buster, I *am* glad to see you. Won't you sit down?" She pushed a chair toward him. "You remember Mr. Thorpe and Miss Morton, don't you, Mr. Billings?"

"Sure, remember back in Seattle?" Buster began.

"Say, who's your boy friend?" Estelle interrupted.

"Him? Oh, that's Jack Robin. We trailed around out in the sticks together for a long time, playin' the four-a-day. But I left him out in Cheyenne and I ain't seen him since until to-day. Bumped into him down to Schuler's office huntin' a bookin'. Want to meet him?"

"Sure thing. Bring him over." Estelle was nothing if not "just a pal."

Buster turned round and motioned to Jack, who was eagerly watching the little party. At

the signal he jumped up and hurried forward. Then he slowed down in an attempt to hide his eagerness. And, taking it by and large, it was a rather embarrassed young man who finally grasped Mary's hand and mumbled something which neither Mary nor he, himself, understood.

"Won't you sit here, Mr. Robin," Mary motioned to a vacant chair beside her. "I want to congratulate you, if I may, on your singing. You have a splendid voice."

Jack looked around scarcely knowing how to answer.

"Why—why—thank you, Miss Dale," he stuttered. "That's very—very kind of you."

"And you really have an extraordinary way of putting a song over," Mary continued. "What are you doing now?"

Jack became more and more confused. He couldn't tell this girl that he was bumming a free meal, out of a job, and without a penny in his pockets.

"Well, I—I'm sort of looking around," he managed to answer.

Mary nodded, chin in hand, considering carefully this man beside her and his possibilities.

The music struck up again and couples began to dance out on the floor.

"Want to dance," Ben turned to Estelle.

"We don't seem to be particularly necessary around here," she laughed in answer, looking at Mary and Jack, who sat absorbed in the contemplation of each other.

They joined the group on the dance square. Buster opened his mouth as though to speak, and then looked from Jack to Mary, and from Mary to Jack. What he saw discouraged speech, so he pushed his chair back, mumbling something about "two being a company but three was about as useful as a top sergeant," and wandered off to talk to Frank.

"You know, I caught your act in the Orpheum at Salt Lake," Jack leaned forward, boyishly enthusiastic and eager to talk, now that the conversation had turned from himself. "Gee, I think you're great."

"Oh, did you really?" Mary smiled. "Where were you playing?"

Jack hesitated. He had been singing in a motion picture house of the cheap variety, and he didn't exactly know what effect the revelation of his status in show business might have on this girl whom he had so long admired from a distance. But he finally decided to tell the truth and take the consequences.

"I sang in a picture house there," he began. "You know—you know one of those places where you have about eight appearances a day. It wasn't far from the Orpheum, and I used

to go down the alley and watch you in between my numbers."

The girl gave him a quick look—but it was a look full of sympathy and understanding, for she knew instinctively that he was telling the truth. She felt that this boy had something that was worth while, and she was anxious to help him if she could. Whether or not there were any other feelings concerned in her attitude toward him, Mary would not admit, even to herself. She had traveled a hard road, too, and this very fact made her more appreciative of the trials of getting on in the theater.

"You know Buster told me that the 'Little Follies' act was playing here," Jack rambled on, "but I never expected to really meet you. I wanted to see your act again."

"I'll tell you what," Mary had reached a decision quickly, "I've got to get back to the theater in about ten minutes to rehearse a new number. But why don't you drop around back stage to-morrow afternoon about two. I'd like to introduce you to our manager. I don't know whether he'd be able to do anything for you or not, but it won't hurt to try."

Jack looked at the girl wonderingly. For the first time in his life he had found some one who really took enough interest in him to want to do something for him.

"But do you—do you think I can make the

grade?" His voice was timorous, not because he lacked belief in himself, but because he had been so buffeted about and so long unable to find work that his courage was a little the worse for wear.

"I'm sure you can," Mary returned confidently. "I think your voice should get you a long way on the big time. You sing jazz, yes. But it's entirely different. It's a new idea, and that's what everybody wants—a new idea. Yours has tears in it."

Impulsively, with an almost childlike gesture, Jack stretched out his hand to the girl. He was close to tears himself. And the confidence that she had given him made him more the Jack Robin he had been before his run of bad luck. But he drew his hand away quickly, fearful lest she might misunderstand him. Somehow, something in the girl's impersonal manner, her disarming smile, made him realize that she was not encouraging any overtures, and he wanted to hold her friendship high and dear.

"I must run, now," Mary was saying. "But don't forget. I'll see you at the theater at two to-morrow."

"I'll never forget," Jack rose to his feet. "At two to-morrow."

They shook hands and Mary waved to her friends and started out the door toward the theater.

CHAPTER VI

The Dawn of a New Day

With the unquestioning generosity so common to theatrical people who must share the rigors of the road one with another, Frank took Buster and Jack under his wing that night and his small apartment sheltered them all. And if they did not have either the comforts of home or the conveniences of a hotel their troubles were by no means augmented. For after days of weary travel, and nights spent in the open field with no covering save the stars, or if fortunate, the rafters of a barn, four walls and a ceiling seemed heaven. Moreover, Buster was not of the worrying kind and Jack was so elated by the events of the evening that a stable would have seemed a palace to him.

Even yet he could scarcely believe that he was the same Jack Robin who had so disconsolately walked into the Star Vaudeville Circuit Offices only that afternoon. To himself he seemed to be an entirely different person, and in truth he had changed. Gone was his depression of the past months; gone his morbid avowal of the futility of all things. In their place came a long-lost sensation of real happi-

ness, a reëstablished sense of security and comfort. And the very fact that Mary Dale had wrought this transformation made it doubly important.

In his wildest dreams Jack had scarcely dared hope that this girl would have a second thought for him—even should he be so fortunate as to meet her. He, to his way of thinking, was only a song bird of cheap music halls and indifferent motion picture houses, while she—she was already playing the "big-time" and would, before long, be a star in her own right. Added to that, she had an unusual share of beauty, as well as an inner loveliness and fineness, and a cultural background.

Jack had met many girls in the theater in his ten years of work. He had exchanged pleasantries with them; discussed the gossip of the hour with them; traveled along with them, but always his heart had remained untouched. Strange, indeed, it was, what with such promiscuity as that to which he was subjected, and the fact that he was often lonely and alone, that he had never fallen in love, or, which is just as serious, *thought* he had fallen in love, with any of them. That is, up until the time he had first seen Mary Dale. After that he watched from afar and worshiped blindly.

And now he had met her. And more—she had even been interested in his voice. Jack did

not flatter himself that Mary was interested in him for himself, even though other girls had shown that kind of concern. For he had developed from the little Jakie Rabinowitz of the Ghetto into a good looking, clean cut young man, and even amid the stress and trials of the road, he always maintained a kindliness and a courtesy that had its own appeal in contrast to the bluff harshness of hard-boiled managers and seasoned vaudevillians.

Jack slept fitfully, sometimes waking all atremble with the thought that everything that had transpired was but a part of a dream. Then he would glance uneasily about him and see the strange walls and realize that he was actually where he believed he was. Sometimes he dreamed that he was trying to keep his two o'clock appointment, but hurry as he might he never quite arrived there. Then he would reach hastily for the alarm clock and discover that it was but five or six in the morning.

But at last it came eleven o'clock and Jack awakened with the pleasant odor of frying bacon and steaming coffee filling his nostrils. He shaved with the aid of Frank's razor and he, with Buster and Frank, sat down to breakfast.

"All set for the big scene?" inquired Buster.

"Well, I'm going to do my best," Jack answered, smiling.

"Atta boy!" encouraged Frank. "And I'll give you ten to one you land."

"I've got to try, anyhow, after all Miss Dale is doing for me," Jack said seriously.

"You bet," Buster agreed. "An' if I can get any kind of a bookin' here I'll catch up with you. It would seem like old times sharin' the same dressin' room again."

"It certainly would," Jack assented warmly. "And you'd better try to do that—providing, of course, I land."

"I sure will," Buster nodded. "Got a clean shirt?"

"That's all right, Buster. Jack can borrow one of mine," Frank offered.

"I got a clean pair of socks an' a swell tie I bought once when I was in luck back in li'l Ol' New York," Buster proffered.

"Boy! That sure would be swell," Jack thanked them. "I had my trou' under the mattress last night. They don't look so bad, do they?" He rose and turned about for clothes inspection.

"You'll be all right when we send you off," Frank appraised him. "Just remember you got a voice and you're going to use it."

By half past one Buster and Frank had Jack regaled in the best clothes that all three of them could muster, and they were still shouting encouragement and good wishes as they pushed

him out of the door. And at a quarter before two Jack was standing before the stage door of the Orpheum Theater, debating as to whether he should enter or not.

But Mary was already inside and talking hurriedly to the actor-manager of the "Little Follies" troupe.

"I tell you, Mr. Berg, you can't lose on this boy," she was urging a heavy-set man with gleaming eyes almost lost in a thick tangle of bushy eyebrows, who played a comedy rôle in the show and managed the troupe. "He has a real voice—and a good, straight song number wouldn't hurt the act at all."

"Hum—I don't know, Mary," Berg answered. "We've got plenty expense as it is, and I'd have to take the matter up with the office in New York."

"You can wire back. You took Dorothy Thorne on that way," Mary referred to one of the "hoofers" who had been added to the act on the road.

"Ye-e-es, I know, and that's one reason I hate to add another one to the salary list."

"But if we go back to New York with a better act than the one they gave us don't you think you'd get all the credit coming to you as a manager," Mary argued.

"Ye-e-es, but——"

"And the office certainly can't complain about

the act. We've always got our notices in every town. Why, the scrap book tells the story."

"Ye-e-es, but——"

"But you can at least give him a try-out, Mr. Berg, and if he isn't as good as I say he is, well—we'll forget all about it."

"All right, Mary, all right. Anything to keep you quiet," laughed Berg.

By this time Jack had gathered his courage and decided that it was time to make an appearance. He asked the doorman for Miss Dale, and as Berg was concluding his agreement the old man came up to Mary and announced her visitor.

"Bring him right in," Mary requested.

The doorman shuffled off to find Jack. He brought the singer into the little hallway and pointed to Mary and Berg with a mumbled: "There's the lady."

Jack hurried across the stage, hand outstretched.

"Good morning, Miss Dale," he smiled, but his heart was beating double-quick time.

"Oh, Mr. Robin, good morning. I'm glad you came. Mr. Robin, this is Mr. Berg, our company manager," Mary introduced the two, who shook hands. "Mr. Berg's just told me that he'll give you an audition."

"Er—now—I don't know—let me see," Berg consulted his watch. "Our act goes on early—

this is our fourth week—so suppose I see you about four, if you can wait——"

"Thank you, Mr. Berg, I'll be glad to wait," Jack interrupted anxiously.

"All right, then. Come around about four and I'll be free. Can I fix you up for the matinée?"

"Well, I'd like to catch the 'Little Follies' act, if you don't mind," Jack assented.

"Sure." Berg pulled out a pass book from his pocket and hastily scribbled his signature in the corner of one of the checks, tore it off and handed it to Jack. "The box office will give you a location."

"Thanks, Mr. Berg. Then I'll see you at four?" Jack pocketed the pass.

"All right. Glad to have met you," Berg shoved his hat back on his head and made a hasty exit.

"Miss Dale, I can never begin to thank you enough," Jack turned to Mary, and the two went toward her dressing room.

"Oh, I haven't done so much," Mary laughed. "Wait until you see Berg, and then maybe you won't thank me."

"But at least you've given me a chance, and that's more than I've been hoping for, for a long time," Jack looked longingly down at the petite, graceful figure beside him.

"That's all right, big boy. Run along, now,

and enjoy the show, and report to me after you're through with Berg. Here's luck," Mary held out her hand.

Jack grasped the girl's slender fingers eagerly.

"I'll be back just as soon as I can," he murmured.

Mary waved and turned into her dressing room, while Jack walked slowly out front to pick up his seat at the box office and wait for four o'clock to come.

At last the big clock in the auditorium showed the appointed hour and Jack hurried back stage to find Berg. The two went up the winding stairs to the manager's office, Jack a little fearfully; Berg a little questioningly.

"We'll have to get a pianist," Berg stated, once they were in the office where an upright piano and a few baskets of artificial flowers made up the brief decorations. He picked up a phone and called back stage.

"Ask Jimmy Liggett if he can come up to the manager's office for a few minutes," he requested the stage hand at the other end of the wire.

They waited impatiently for the arrival of the pianist of the "Little Follies" Company.

"Jimmy, can you accompany Mr. Robin?" Berg asked as Jimmy appeared, the make-up still on his face. "I want to try his voice."

"Sure," Jimmy sat down at the piano and struck a few chords. "What d'you want?" He turned to Jack.

Jack selected one of the "mammy" songs. As the introduction rattled out he trembled violently. He took his cue in a shaky voice. And then he thought of the golden-haired girl downstairs who had taken enough interest in him to give him this chance. For her sake he couldn't fail—he mustn't fail. His voice gathered volume. He got into his stride. He sang.

Berg was looking on, at first disinterestedly. Then as Jack's voice rolled out, he sat up with a start. By the time the songster was finished he was sitting on the edge of his chair. At the conclusion of the music Berg drummed for a few moments with his fingers on the arm of his wicker seat.

"Hm-m-m," he began, slowly. "Tell you what I'll do, Mr. Robin. I can't make any decision myself. I'll have to wire the New York office. But I like your voice, and that's a good number. We're leaving to-night to open in Los Angeles on Sunday. I'll take a chance and carry you along. I ought to get a report by Tuesday morning, and then, if there's nothing doing, Well" he shrugged his shoulders. "It's just a chance."

"I'll take it, Mr. Berg," Jack answered

A Warner Bros. Production. *The Jazz Singer.*

"I'D WALK A MILLION MILES FOR ONE OF YOUR SMILES, MY MAMMY!"

quickly. "I understand that if the answer isn't favorable, I'm out."

"Exactly. And if it is—I'll tell you," Berg interrupted himself. "We'll try out that number Sunday matinée. The Star Vaudeville Circuit has a branch office there and the manager will be around to look over the show. If he says it's O.K. and the New York report is favorable we can take you right on."

"That suits me," Jack responded warmly. "And thank you, Mr. Berg."

"We leave on the Sunset Limited to-morrow night," Berg told him, "at 6:15. Get into L. A. at 8:05 Sunday morning. We play the Orpheum there. You'd better be at the theater about ten and arrange this number with the orchestra. I'll be there to give you your spot in the act."

"Thank you, Mr. Berg," Jack hurried back stage to find Mary.

"Miss Dale," he called, pounding excitedly on Mary's dressing room door. "Miss Dale, it's Jack Robin. Can I see you a moment?"

Mary opened the door a few inches, pulling her dressing gown about her.

"What did he say?" she questioned eagerly —almost as eagerly as Jack, himself, felt.

"He said he liked my voice and I had a good number and he's going to wire New York, and

I'm going to Los Angeles with you to try out a song Sunday mat. and——"

"Not so fast. You have me all muddled," Mary laughed. "You say he's going to take you along to Los Angeles?"

"Yes, and he says that if the manager there reports favorably and it's O.K. with the New York office, he'll take me on."

"Congratulations," Mary exclaimed. "That means Berg is sold, and you'll be with us. If you'll wait I'll be dressed in a few minutes and we can talk." She shut the door.

Jack paced the floor, a song on his lips and happiness flowering in his heart.

CHAPTER VII

Weary Israel

The ten years that had wrought the changes in Jakie Rabinowitz of the Ghetto and turned him into Jack Robin, a "black face" songster, had failed to make very much impression on the Orchard Street Synagogue and the home of Cantor Rabinowitz. The Cantor and his wife had aged—that seemed to be about all. The lines were a little deeper in their faces; their hair was just a little more gray; their steps were a little less steady. The sorrow in their hearts, of which they seldom spoke now, had engraved itself a little deeper with each passing year.

True, the children who had been children with Jakie had grown into manhood. But each year brought new recruits to the Cantor's choir. Each year saw a few changes in the faces of the boys of the School. The Cantor noticed little difference, however. They all sang as badly as ever, with the exception of one or two. And the Cantor continued teaching his age-old chants and prayers. Even now, seated at a table in his home, he was instructing a favorite pupil.

"No, no, no! Didn't I tell you how you should sing it," the Cantor interrupted the boy's song nervously. "Sing it with a sigh. With a sigh—do you understand! You are praying to God. Nu, try again."

Moey, a lean Ghetto child of about ten years of age looked seriously out of great dark eyes set in an oval, olive-skinned face, at his preceptor.

"Yes, sir," he nodded, and once more took up the wailing strain of the chant, his little head bobbing seriously and his mouth opening wide.

"No, Moey, no!" The Cantor called his scholar to a halt. "Do you understand what it means, them words you are singing? What means 'Vaanee Sefeelosee'?"

"It means, 'I, my prayer.' "

"Good! And what does it mean, "Ais Rutzon Elohim'?"

" 'When you are ready, O God.' "

"Hm-m-m! A smart boy you are, Moey. Nu, what means it 'Berov Chasdecho Aneni Beemes Yishecho'?"

Moey hesitated, his head downcast, tracing the flowered patterns of the rug with an embarassed toe.

"I—I don't know," he admitted.

"Don't I tell you you should learn that! A smart boy like you what has the most beautiful voice in the choir! Never will you learn to

sing until you know what means the words. Nu, Moey, listen. It means, 'I offer my prayer to you when you are ready, O God, with your multitudes of benedictions—answer me, O God, with truth, and help me.' Nu, again sing."

Once more the childish voice prayed in song. But the Cantor shook his head impatiently.

"Stop! Stop!" he cried, pressing his hands to his tired head. "Oi, I wish my Jakie was here. He could show you how to sing it. The words he understood when he was a little boy yet. And such a voice—like an angel." The Cantor stared dreamily into space, forgetful of his pupil.

"He ran away from home, didn't your Jakie?"

"Who said— Where did you heard that?" The Cantor looked up, startled from his reverie of the past.

"Gee, all the boys in the choir know that," Moey responded. "Why did he run away," the child persisted.

The Cantor stared, unseeing.

"I ain't got any boy," he said at last.

"But Mike Lefkowitz says your boy is a singer in a theayter way out west—in Pittsburgh or Buffalo," Moey insisted.

"I ain't got any boy." The Cantor rose. "I ain't got any boy," he repeated listlessly. "So, is finished the lesson for to-day," he pulled him-

self together with an effort. "Come back tomorrow."

The boy, staring at the Cantor, silently took his cap and left the house. At the sound of the shutting door Mrs. Rabinowitz peered into the living room.

"Is he gone, Moey?" she questioned, looking round the room.

The Cantor looked up and mumbled an acquiescence.

"He is a good boy," Mrs. Rabinowitz sighed.

"Yes, Sara," the Cantor agreed. "It's a pleasure to hear him singing in the choir. And his papa, Olov Hasholem, was a rabbi. Maybe from Moey I can make yet a Cantor. Yes, from him I will make a great Cantor."

"It seems like yesterday our Jakie was standing so and you was learning him to sing," Mrs. Rabinowitz sighed.

"Sara!" The Cantor faced about angrily. "I ask you already a thousand times you shouldn't speak his name in my house."

"But papa, I heard you from the kitchen," Mrs. Rabinowitz defended herself. "You spoke it yourself to Moey."

"Well, Moey and me we was singing, and—well, I made a mistake."

"A mistake! A papa should speak from his only son one time in ten years and it's a mistake!"

"It ain't good, Sara, that we should think too much about that boy. He don't think about us. God knows if he's maybe now in jail."

"How can you speak like this from your only child. Jakie's a good boy and he ain't in jail. In the last letter he says——"

"I don't want to know from his letters," the Cantor interrupted bitterly.

"But he's got a steady job now."

"Oi, oi, maybe you could forget what he done, I can't." The Cantor paced the floor nervously. "The Day of Atonement it was. A crowded synagogue. So proud we was! Everybody waiting to hear the Cantor's son sing 'Kol Nidre.' And he runs away. Oi, weh is mir!"

"Yosele, please! I feel lonely for our Jakie."

"And you think I don't?" The Cantor turned and faced his wife. "Don't speak no more," he commanded.

"Is so, papa, I won't. But Jakie has a good job. He is making money yet."

"Money! Money! Is that all he should know? A little less money and more God is better."

"Yosele, please," Mrs. Rabinowitz laid a restraining hand on her husband's arm. "You shouldn't excite yourself. Go lay down and take a rest. I won't talk no more of Jakie. Please to go."

"All right, Sara," the Cantor patted his wife's shoulder wearily. "I'll go now and lay down and maybe I'll feel better." He moved slowly toward the bedroom and closed the door behind him.

Mrs. Rabinowitz sank down in the morris chair and swayed slowly back and forth, moaning softly to herself. After a while she pulled a letter from the front of her dress and looked longingly at the envelope. She turned it over and inspected the reverse side gravely. Then she held it to her lips and kissed it again and again. But she was interrupted by a knock. Quickly replacing the letter in the bosom of her dress, she went over to the door and opened it.

"Mr. Yudelson," she exclaimed. "Come in. It is a pleasure we should see you. The Cantor is laying down."

"Good evening, Mrs. Rabinowitz." Moisha Yudelson stepped into the room. Save for a more perceptible thinness of beard and a few additional wrinkles, Yudelson, too, had changed but little with the years. "I just come to see how is the Cantor."

"He is a little tired, so he lays down to rest. Sit down, Mr. Yudelson. Sit down." Mrs. Rabinowitz pulled a chair forward. "To-day is from Jakie a letter. I want you should read it to me." Mrs. Rabinowitz brought out her letter and handed it to Yudelson, who took it

and sat down near the table. He reached in his vest pocket for his glasses, adjusted them to his eyes, and began to open the missive.

Mrs. Rabinowitz drew her chair close to the table and waited impatiently for Yudelson to begin. Yudelson cleared his throat and painstakingly spelled out the letter.

" 'Omaha, June fourth,' " he read. " 'Dear mama: I thought you would like to know I am getting along great in vaudeville.' He says he has a good job in vodville," Yudelson turned to the anxious Sara to repeat, in his own words, the contents of Jakie's message. " 'And maybe I will soon be a headliner,' " mumbled the interpreter. "He says he should bicome maybe a headliner."

"A headliner? What is?" questioned the puzzled Mrs. Rabinowitz, reaching for the letter to look at it herself.

"A headliner is a—a—a headliner is the best ector in the theayter with his name on the electric lights. He should make plenty money."

"So, my Jakie is a headliner," Mrs. Rabinowitz nodded proudly. "Nu, what else?" She handed the letter back to Yudelson.

" 'And a wonderful girl whose name is Mary Dale got me my big chance out in 'Frisco,' " Yudelson read. He says a girl give him his job."

"A girl? So, does he say what is her name?" Mrs. Rabinowitz asked eagerly.

"Sure. He says—he says," Yudelson reread the letter to find the name. "It is 'Mary Dale.'"

"H'm-m-m!" Mrs. Rabinowitz was becoming concerned. "Read it again what he says about the girl."

"'And a wonderful girl whose name is Mary Dale got me my big chance out in 'Frisco,'" Yudelson repeated, watching his listener's face closely. "Nu, anything else?"

Mrs. Rabinowitz hesitated, considering the information gravely.

"Maybe he is fallen in love," she looked up at Yudelson, frowning, "and by her name she is a shiksa."

"Nein, Mrs. Rabinowitz," Yudelson thought carefully before he answered. "Maybe not. You know Jennie Levi on the stage is Genevieve Leeds."

Mrs. Rabinowitz seemed to be relieved at the solution of the situation. "Nu, something else he says?" she pointed to the letter.

"'Maybe I will be in New York soon,'" Yudelson read. He says maybe he comes to New York soon. 'And the minute I arrive in the city—'" he turned to Mrs. Rabinowitz. "He says and the minute he comes to the city, he says—he says—'I will see you.' He says

he will see you. 'From your loving son, Jakie.' He says from your son what loves you."

"Mr. Yudelson! Jakie says maybe he comes soon to New York? Is the true?" Mrs. Rabinowitz caught the letter eagerly and tried to puzzle out the, to her, strange characters that signified this good news. "Oi, Mr. Yudelson! Even this afternoon yet the Cantor and me we was speaking from Jakie," she cried excitedly, "and now maybe he comes to New York. Something else he says?" she questioned eagerly, handing back the letter.

"'P.S. You can write me care State-Lake Theater, Chicago. Remember the name is Jack Robin.'" Yudelson carefully spelled out the postscript. "He says he is by the State-Lake Theayter at Chicago, and don't forget he is Jack Robin," Yudelson explained, returning the letter to Mrs. Rabinowitz.

"Thank you, Mr. Yudelson," Mrs. Rabinowitz returned the letter to her bosom. Then she tiptoed over to the bedroom door and opened it noiselessly and looked in. She closed it softly. "The Cantor is asleep," she informed Yudelson.

The visitor nodded and rose. "Well, goodby, Mrs. Rabinowitz. Tell the Cantor I'll come back."

"I'll tell him you was here, Mr. Yudelson."

Mrs. Rabinowitz let her visitor out and returned to her chair.

She sat pondering over the letter Yudelson had just read. So Jakie, her Jakie, was a big actor in a theater. And maybe he would soon be in New York. Her heart jumped at the very thought of seeing her boy again. She wondered whether he had grown tall; whether he had changed very much from the little Jakie she had known. She couldn't visualize this new person called Jack Robin at all. All she could see was the childish face of her son as she remembered it.

And who was this girl that Jakie spoke of? And what was she like? Was he very deeply interested in her? Was he in love? These questions surged in her mother's heart. Jakie had never mentioned any girls in his previous letters. This one seemed to be the first to interest him. He had said that she had got him a job. Perhaps, then, his concern had to do purely with a business relationship. At any rate she had evidently been kind to Jakie, and that was a satisfaction in its way.

But what were girls like who acted in theaters? The Cantor had disapproved of the theater for his son—but perhaps that had been mainly because he had set his heart on the boy becoming a Cantor. She knew very little of theatrical life, and wondered whether the people

of the stage were not just a little different from those who lived surrounded by homes and families.

And then she thought of Jakie wandering from city to city, living in hotels, and eating restaurant food. And she thought of his own comfortable little room that stood waiting for his return. And she wondered who would darn his socks—Jakie always had managed to have so many holes in heels and toes—and who would sew the buttons on his shirts and keep him clean and neat as she had always done.

Now she heard the Cantor stirring in the next room, and her first impulse was to rush in and tell him of the news contained in the letter. But she remembered her promise to speak no more of Jakie, and perhaps, she thought, it would be better to allow her husband's wrath to cool before she suggested any kind of reconciliation. And so she sat and prayed silently for the return of her only child.

CHAPTER VIII

A Broken Melody

Before a shimmering silver drop that fell in langorous folds ten swaying forms in gossamer green gyrated through a maze of delicate measures. Ten pattering pairs of facile feet wove sinuous circles on a bed of pale pink rose petals. In high relief against the green silver a rippling fountain nymph caught in a lavender rain spray whirled and eddied in a vortex of mellifluous harmonies. Lambent flames of limpid amber immersed the symphony in a golden fluid of light. The audience thundered its applause.

Behind the silver curtain stage hands worked in feverish activity setting up the next scene. Backgrounded by tall, white-brick walls that, like the tower of Babel rose toward a sky domed by inch-wide iron slats; clouded by painted canvases swinging from long ropes; starred by pendulous sandbags, these figures of earth moved silently with the precision of a Ballet Mecanique. In the semi-darkness long shadows wavered amid the gangling lines, until the air was filled with writhing undulations as

ephemeral as the shadows of the Brooklyn Bridge seen of a misty evening.

As the curtain fell the house orchestra jazzed into a rousing air. The audience still called. Up went the curtain and Mary Dale took her bow, gathering the lavender rain spray of tinsel closely about her. As she bowed she could see standing in the wings the black face and great, painted lips of Jack Robin. With his white-cotton gloved hands he, too, was showering his adulation. Again and again the house lights went up and down on the curtain calls.

As she took another bow Mary turned in the wings to face Jack Robin. They smiled, gazed into each other's eyes. A strange contrast they made, these two. The blonde coloring of the girl, accentuated by the dark mascara on her eyes and the lavender of her costume that reflected some of its lights on her shell-pink arms and neck. The black oiliness of the negro make-up on the boy's face; the little white line revealing the skin of the forehead where, on the stage, the curly black wig had covered it. But so accustomed were they to seeing each other in this guise of the theater that the sights did not strike them as at all incongruous.

"I don't know what I'd do, Jack, if it wasn't for the encouragement you give me," Mary laughed up at the black face before her, a little teasing, a little provocative.

"But I love to watch you dance," Jack attempted to explain his presence in the wings, realizing that Mary was laughing at him.

"Take your curtain," a stage hand was calling to Mary, as he rang up in answer to the applause that was still to be heard from out front.

Mary ran on again, bowed, and returned, as the curtain fell.

"Well, it's something to know that some one appreciates your work," Mary resumed the conversation where they had left off.

But her words embarrassed Jack not a little. During the time they had been traveling together he had never once forced his attention on the girl. They had been good companions in fair weather and foul. Mary appreciated Jack's reserve, but she knew, too, with the innate consciousness of every woman, that it was her own attitude that had helped to further this feeling of comradeship without turning it into a sentimental affair. And it was for this reason that she held always to a lighter vein of talk, excepting during those times when each discussed his work.

"But you know I'm just crazy about—about your act," Jack finished off his sentence awkwardly. But it was plainly evident from the tender glow in his eyes and the slight catch in his voice, that he had meant something quite different.

Mary smiled, and pushed Jack around toward the dressing rooms.

"Hurry up and dress," she told him, opening her own door. "I've got something to show you as soon as I get out of this make-up."

Jack hurried off to change, but not before several of the chorus girls wending their way up the circular iron staircase to the dressing rooms on the balcony had noticed the two together and had caught Jack's frank avowal of interest in Mary. They entered the dressing room and began unhooking their bodices and slipping out of their costumes.

"Say, he sure is goofy about her," nodded a short, plump brunette who had recently joined the show.

"Listen, babe, we got that before Noah was a pup," put in a tall, red-haired girl who affected a pale make-up. "He's been cheering from the side lines ever since we left 'Frisco."

"Ta-dee-da-de . . . Ta de-e-eda dee," the plump brunette hummed the opening bars of the Wedding March.

"Aw, he ain't got a chance," interposed a fuzzy-haired peroxide blonde, carefully drawing on a pair of sheer silk stockings.

"I should tell the world not," the red-haired girl added. "No 'mammy' singer for Mary. She's got ideas, she has."

"Hey, what d'ya mean, ya bum?" a slim girl

turned to appraise the speaker, the cold cream still thick on her face and a sticky make-up cloth in her hand. "Mary's a good kid, and I'll beat hell out of anyone that says different."

"O, shut up, nobody's picking on you," the red-haired girl defended herself. "I'll say what I please."

"Not about Mary, you won't. Just because she's got enough brains to want to get on you bums give her the razzberry. You make me tired!"

"Pipe down, you two," screamed the peroxide blonde, "and give me a chance at that rag." She snatched the make-up cloth from the slim girl. And Mary and Jack were forgotten for the moment.

Downstairs Jack was sitting before his dressing table creaming his face and removing the grease paint. Beside him, energetically rubbing his chubby features, sat Buster Billings, who had, as he had hoped, caught up with the show, and because of their old friendship the two were still dressing together and sharing the same mirror. Jack was dreaming forgetfully of Mary. After a while he turned on his chair and looked at his friend.

"I wonder what it was Mary had to show me, Buster," he questioned thoughtfully.

"Can't imagine. Maybe it's an engagement ring," Buster teased.

Jack's heart stopped beating for an entire second and then leaped frantically into his mouth. Then he caught the levity in Buster's wide grin and he smiled, but it was not a particularly successful attempt at merriment.

"Oh, it could hardly be that. Not that I'd blame anybody for being—for falling—" Jack floundered helplessly. "But you know what I mean, Buster. But Mary's so interested in her work, and—and," he looked frantically at his friend for help and assurance.

"Aw, I was only jokin', Jack," Buster rose to hang up his costume. He came and laid a friendly arm across the singer's shoulder. "But you'd better forget her, kid. She's wrapped up in her career—you said it. An' you got a chance for Broadway yourself if you keep goin'."

Jack sighed and turned away. He felt that what Buster had said was true—still, that didn't keep him from dreaming his dreams; it didn't keep the ache out of his heart; it couldn't paralyze those sharp little needles that ran up and down his spine each time he looked at Mary. He changed from his ludicrous costume into a street suit.

"I'm just going to see Mary for a few minutes, Buster. I'll be right back," he called, closing the dressing room door.

He walked along the passage and knocked at the door of dressing room Number One.

"Mary," he called, "it's Jack."

"Just a minute," Mary flung open the door and turned around to adjust her hat before the mirror. "Come on in."

Jack entered, a little fearful of what he might be going to hear, and yet anxious to hear it that he might relieve himself of his anxiety. Mary's eyes were shining, and she was humming a little tune.

"Look, Jack. Read that!" She picked up a telegram from her dressing room table and handed it over. Jack took it and opened it mechanically. Then his eyes, too, brightened.

" 'New York—Miss Mary Dale—State-Lake Theater, Chicago, Ill.,' " he read. " 'Would you consider leading role new musical show fall opening stop rehearsals begin two weeks stop wire answer. Harry Lee.' "

He turned to face a happily smiling girl who could scarcely keep her feet still.

"Gee, that's a great chance for you, Mary," he exclaimed, returning the wire. "But I always knew you'd get it."

"I know. Isn't it marvelous." Mary was nervously searching for pocketbook and gloves and not quite conscious of whether she was looking for anything at all or not. "Just think! That's the opportunity I've been waiting for

ever since I began to dance. And now it's here. O, Jack, I can hardly believe it."

"How did it happen? Do you know?" Jack asked still enthusiastic.

"Well, you see I was sent to Lee several times from a casting agency," Mary explained, "but somehow my work never seemed to fit any of his shows. Then one time he caught our act when we were playing Brooklyn, and he came back to see me, and he said then that he liked my work, and as soon as he got a show that would suit me he wanted to take a chance and put me on. He's really a frightfully nice sort of person. But I'm so thrilled!"

"I know, Mary. I don't blame you. Gee, that's the chance we're all looking for. Have you answered the wire yet?"

"No, I haven't had time. It just came in today. It was here waiting for me when I got to the theater this afternoon, and I was so nervous I didn't know whether I was going to get through the act or not. I didn't say anything about it then, because I thought that if I ever began talking about it, I'd never be able to go on."

"Have you told Berg?"

"No, I haven't told a soul but you. You're the only person who knows about it. But I'll have to see Berg and see how soon I can leave and straighten all that out later. I'm going out

now to answer this, because I don't want to lose any time. I'll probably have to continue this week and then go on to New York. I want to get settled a little there before I start rehearsals. It won't give me much time if I have to start in two weeks. And I want to go up to Muri's and pick up a few new steps, and——"

Mary was talking on and on, but for the first time since he had met the girl Jack was not hanging on her every word. For when she spoke of leaving, finishing out the week, notifying Berg, going on to New York, it was suddenly borne in on Jack's consciousness that this meant, quite possibly, the end of his friendship with Mary. He could see the hateful, creaking iron monster that would fly from Chicago to New York taking with it the one person who had come to mean everything in his life. And after that—he could scarcely bear to think of what could happen after that. Mary would undoubtedly be a star on Broadway, and he would still be a two-a-day singer out on the road.

Jack caught the back of the chair, against which he had been leaning, with an unsteady hand. He had known for some time that sooner or later this break would have to come. But it never seemed so near, so palpably real. And now that it had come, he was stunned for the moment. What should he say? What could he say? He wanted to seize Mary in his arms

and carry her far, far away from stage and theater and managers and agents, and find some nice desert island where there would be no careers to think of. But that sort of thing wasn't done—except in story books, and this was no story—it was stern reality. He sighed longingly, and made an effort to speak.

"I'll be sorry, Mary," he began, "in one way. I hate to see you go. But—but I understand what this means to you. I—we—we'll miss you a lot."

Beneath the brim of her hat Mary smiled. It was a tender little smile, and one that carried a great deal of meaning if Jack could have seen and read it aright. But Mary didn't want him to read that smile just yet. At the proper time—then, it would have its use. Quickly she reached out her hand and patted Jack's arm.

"I know, Jack. And I'll miss you—you all, too," Mary said. And there was a slight catch in her voice, but she turned quickly and laughed. "And after all, you'll probably be playing the East pretty soon——"

"I hope so, Mary. And I'll certainly be waiting to see your show. I hope it goes over," Jack tried to rise to the occasion and forget his own hurt in the happiness so newly come to the girl.

"Well, that's something one can never forecast," Mary answered philosophically. "I once

heard a famous actor say that if anyone could read the public's mind so far as shows were concerned all he'd have to do would be to sit down at a desk and say: 'Gentlemen, the line forms to the right.' "

"And that's the truth," Jack smiled. "But no matter what happens, Mary, you'll always know that I'll be wishing the best of luck and everything for you."

Impulsively Jack caught Mary's hand in his, and the two stood gazing into each other's eyes, lost to the world about them.

"Mary," Jack pressed the girl's hands tenderly between his, "I—I want to tell you—I'll never forget that everything I am I owe to you. Everything I am—or ever will be."

"Thank you, Jack, for saying that," Mary drew her hands away slowly. "But I want you to remember this. I, nor anyone else, could ever make you what you are or will be. You have that within yourself. And you're going to come out on top, Jack, I know it. You have the ability, and you have the voice. You *must* carry on. If I can do anything to help you, I'll do it,—you know that."

"You've already done so much for me, Mary," Jack answered, his voice trembling. "More than I can ever hope to thank you for. If it hadn't been for you——"

"I only gave you a chance, and you made

good." Mary looked up at the singer with frank admiration in her eyes. "If you hadn't had it in you, you'd have flopped. Instead, you got over. So, after all, you're the one who's done the real work. Listen, Jack, it's so easy to create opportunities, but there are so few people who can do anything with them after they have them. And you've proved that you can. And that's more than enough thanks. So forget all about it. I've got to hurry, now." She looked at her wrist watch. "It's four o'clock, and I want to get this wire right off. See you to-night." She found her bag and gloves and the two stepped out into the hallway.

"All right. I have to collect Buster," Jack walked as far as the key rack where Mary hung up the key to her dressing room. "Coming in early?"

"O, about seven thirty. Bye-bye," Mary hurried out the stage door.

Jack wandered back to his dressing room and Buster with happiness and sorrow each fighting for supremacy in his heart.

CHAPTER IX

Eli, Eli

"Ready, Buster?" Jack thrust his head into the dressing room and found his companion adjusting his scarf before the mirror.

"Just a minute," Buster reached for his hat and turned out the lights. "Say, did you see that green tie of mine? Can't find it." He closed the door and turned the key in the lock.

"No. Maybe it's over at the hotel."

The two deposited their key in the rack and went out the stage door, turning into Michigan Avenue. They started across the street lined with tall, stately buildings, dodging the heavy traffic and at last reached the safety of the opposite curb.

"Well, kid, out with it! What'd she have to say," Buster pitted his voice against the busy hum of the streets.

"Buster, Mary's had a marvelous offer, and she's leaving for New York to start rehearsals for a new musical show," Jack tried to keep the note of gladness in his voice but the effect was somewhat unsuccessful. "Isn't that fine?" he added a bit lamely.

"Sure is," Buster looked at his friend as

though speculating as to his reception of the news. "Whose show is it?"

"Harry Lee's. He saw Mary's act in Brooklyn some time ago, and liked her work. She just got the wire this afternoon. Of course, I think it's a great chance for her, but I'm going to miss her." Jack looked away, not anxious to reveal the hurt that he felt, even to his friend.

"That sure is swell," Buster admitted. "An' I hope Mary gets over. But you know what I told you, kid—you've got a chance for Broadway yourself, an' don't let anythin' put you off the track. Sure, you're goin' to miss Mary. But wait 'til you strike the big time. You ain't goin' to miss nothin', then."

Jack nodded, but Buster's words were small comfort. For the first time in years he began to feel actually homesick. Down in his heart there came a longing for old, familiar ground; for the comfort his mother had always afforded him whenever he had been hurt. He wanted to bury his head in that expansive bosom and sob out his troubles. Instead he forced himself to walk stolidly along the Avenue, keeping pace with Buster.

As they came to a tall, modern building Jack's eyes caught sight of a lobby display announcing a special matinée concert given by Cantor Rosenblatt. The placard brought him

to a stop, for the moment. He glanced hurriedly at his wrist watch. It was just four thirty. The concert would be over in another quarter of an hour or so. That would give him time to catch the last numbers of the musicale. He turned to Buster as he saw the latter watching him questioning.

"I—I forgot something at the theater, Buster," he said, hesitatingly. "Suppose you run along. I'll meet you at the hotel. I'll be right over."

"Sure, kid, that's all right. See you later." Buster waved and sauntered on along the street. He had his own ideas as to why Jack was returning to the theater, but he asked no questions.

Buster's ideas were, however, far from right. For Jack turned as though to retrace his steps, but the moment he saw that Buster was lost in the crowds he stepped hurriedly into the lobby of the concert hall, dashed to the box office and purchased a ticket for the performance. The Cantor had just finished a song and had disappeared into the wings. In the semi-gloom Jack found his seat and waited for the reappearance of the performer.

Looking about him Jack saw many people of his own race; well dressed music lovers who could afford to spend the afternoon at a concert. He thought of the little synagogue back

on the East Side where he had once sung these chants and prayers of his people. It seemed not at all strange to him that just as the thought of his home had come recurring to him but a few moments before he should suddenly find this music awaiting him. It appeared, rather, quite reasonable, as though the gods were wise and watched the movements of these insects called humans. And he waited patiently for the next number, without even consulting his program.

"The next and last number to be sung by Cantor Rosenblatt," a gentleman in afternoon clothes was now announcing from the platform, "will be the famous song 'Eli, Eli.'" The man bowed and retired.

The words made Jack start. "Eli, Eli"—the great cry of a troubled people. His people, Jack thought. How fitting it seemed that he should be sitting here now. He had never told his associates in the theater of his home or his parents. He had never talked of the years of training given him by his father that he might be a Cantor. He had felt that he was a part of the theater—that the old years had been completely lost to him. He had even felt a little queer about coming into the concert and it was for that reason that he had deserted Buster. And yet now, as he sat there, he could feel all the old impulses rising; all the old

sentiments stirring. This belonged to him.

"Eli—Eli," the Cantor's voice rolled out over the auditorium. The great Wailing Wall of Jerusalem with its cold, time-worn stones warmed with the pressure of human forms. Women with all-enveloping shawls of soft, warm colors leaning their foreheads against the bulwark. Bearded rabbis with the Talmud before them reciting prayers. "Eli—Eli," the cry from the heart.

Jack sat staring, his eyes fixed hypnotically on the singer. To all outward appearances Jack was a well dressed, good-looking young man, spending an afternoon in a Chicago concert hall listening to a group of Hebrew songs sung by a great Cantor. But to himself Jack was once more a child, waiting in the Orchard Street Synagogue for his father's voice. The form on the platform had assumed the shape of another person; faded in shivering vibrations into the figure of Cantor Rabinowitz. The expensively dressed people about him became one with the familiar figures of his own temple.

Now he stood on the platform with the other boys of the School to sing the songs his father had taught him. He saw the Cantor's tall figure draped in the Prayer Shawl giving the signal for the beginning of the chant. He heard his own young voice surging forth. He raised his eyes to the balcony and caught a glimpse

of his mother's shawled figure swaying among the women. He heard the Rabbi preaching the word of God.

And then the lights were bright and Jack was wiping the tears from his eyes. The audience was stumbling toward the doors, struggling with hats and coats. Seats were being pushed up, and the noisy call of the streets vied with the bustle of the auditorium. Slowly Jack rose and followed the crowds out into the darkening evening.

* * * * * * *

Mrs. Rabinowitz moved hurriedly about the apartment dusting, brushing the floors and carpets, and tantalizing something in a big pot with a big spoon that sent pungent odors throughout the house. "Home in a few days—home in a few days," she kept repeating to herself again and again. A knock at the door sent her scurrying.

"Ach! Hello, Clarence," she said disappointedly.

A young man clad in linen knickers and vivid golf socks, topped by a blue and white blazer stepped into the room.

"Hello, Mrs. Rabinowitz." Clarence entered carrying a bundle under one arm. "I took the afternoon off. It's the Cantor's birthday so I called a meeting of the choir——"

"S-sh! The Cantor's asleep," Mrs. Rabin-

owitz cautioned. "So tired he is to-day from teaching."

"Well, we all contributed toward a little present, Mrs. Rabinowitz." Clarence held out his parcel. "So will you please present this to the Cantor with our best wishes for his continued happiness, peace, prosperity, longevity and the consistent and increasing use of his vocal cords!" Then young man took a deep breath and deposited his bundle in the waiting arms of his hostess.

"Thank you, thank you, Clarence." Mrs. Rabinowitz took the parcel and examined it eagerly. "The present I'll give him, but the words I could never say. What is?" she questioned, poking at the bundle with curious fingers.

"I'll show you," Clarence began to open the choir's gift proudly. "See, it's a praying shawl." He held up the wide scarf.

"A praying shawl! So! Is very nice, Clarence," Mrs. Rabinowitz was examining the material with her fingers. "Thank you. I'll give —Ssh!" she cautioned. "I hear the Cantor. Quick!" With fumbling fingers the two rewrapped the parcel and hid it in the sideboard drawer just as the Cantor opened the bedroom door and entered the room.

"Mr. Kahn." The Cantor addressed his one-time pupil.

A Warner Bros. Production.

"GO! YOU ARE NO LONGER MY SON!"

The Jazz Singer.

"Good evening, Cantor," Clarence answered, a little confused.

"Well, you came to see me?"

"Ah—well—ah—I—I graduate from City College in a few days and I—ah—just dropped in to tell you about it. Good evening." Clarence backed hastily out into the hallway and closed the door behind him.

The Cantor turned to his wife puzzled. "What's the matter with him?" he questioned. "What's happening to-day, Sara?" He sniffed the odors of cleaning and cooking.

"Well, is—you'll find out at supper, Yosele," Mrs. Rabinowitz smiled in an attempt to conceal her excitement.

"Hm! I smell turkey." The Cantor sniffed wisely. "It's only Thursday. What kind business is turkey in the middle of the week. You are expecting company, no?"

"Hum! Such a guesser," she beamed, but the secret was becoming too much for her to keep. "Don't you know what day it is to-day?"

"Thursday. It is no kind of holiday?" The Cantor was still puzzled, but he smiled on the anxious, happy figure of his wife.

"It's to-day your birthday, Yosele," Mrs. Rabinowitz cried, throwing her arms about her husband's neck and kissing him. "You're sixty years old to-day."

"Ts—ts—ts—sixty years old. It couldn't

be!" The Cantor kissed his wife and smiled a little sadly. Sixty years was long to live, yet it seemed to him now so short a space of time.

"Yes, it is," Mrs. Rabinowitz was answering his quizzical look. "And you should live, mine teure, to be a hundred and sixty and not miss one day in the Synagogue. The turkey what I told you, that's a present from Mr. Yudelson. And the jug of wine he brought! We're making for you a surprise! And what do you think? They brought you a beautiful praying shawl!"

"Praying shawl? Who did?"

"Both of them. Mr. Yudelson and Clarence —he brought you a present from the whole choir." Mrs. Rabinowitz opened the sideboard door and got out the gifts, unwrapping them proudly, and taking more joy in the thought that was given her husband than if it had been for her. "See!" She held up the shawls, "this one is Clarence's, and this one from Mr. Yudelson." She spread the shawls out on the table with a loving hand.

"Yudelson's jewelry business must be making lots money, he should be able to give such nice presents." The Cantor examined the shawls with appreciation.

Mrs. Rabinowitz watched her husband in silence. She started as though to speak, and then stopped.

"Yosele—I—I didn't get you no present, this year," she finally acknowledged.

"You don't have to, Sara," the Cantor put a caressing arm about his wife.

"Well, the true is, I did. But I have to change it." Mrs. Rabinowitz looked up at her husband a little confused. "Would you believe it—I got you a praying shawl, too."

The Cantor began to laugh.

"No, no, Sara, you shouldn't to change it. Now we got enough praying shawls for twenty years." He kissed his wife happily.

"You should wear them in good health, mine teure," Mrs. Rabinowitz exclaimed.

The Cantor began to fold up his shawls carefully and to return them to their paper. He settled his skull cap and reached for his hat.

"Well, I'm going to the Synagogue for a little while, Sara," the Cantor explained. "I want I should wear the praying shawl you give me. Where is it?"

Mrs. Rabinowitz delightedly produced her gift and opened it.

"It's beautiful," the Cantor complimented his wife, shaking out the scarf and putting it about his shoulders. "We'll save the others." He kissed the mazuzah and opened the door.

"Don't stay too long—everything is on the stove," Mrs. Rabinowitz called after her husband. "Supper will soon be ready."

"Just a little while, Sara," the Cantor returned, closing the door behind him.

Mrs. Rabinowitz once more took up her housewifely duties. But as she heard the Cantor's steps dying away she took a telegram from her bosom and kissed it. Once more she opened it and looked longingly on the wording. Though she was unable to read it, she knew every word by heart. Three weeks it had been since she had heard from Jakie in Chicago, and now this telegram—home in a few days! She kissed the signature lovingly, and then reached up on a high shelf and brought down a vase. From the vase she produced a packet of letters, tied with a little blue ribbon. She undid the package tenderly and placed the wire on the top, and then retied them.

Through the open windows came the sound of a hurdy-gurdy. An operatic air rolled to a climatic ending and changed to a jazz tune. Mrs. Rabinowitz heard the music and smiled. It sounded so boisterously happy and fitted to her mood of exultation. She took some pennies from a glass on the sideboard and rolled them up in a bit of paper. She leaned out of the window and threw the little offering into the street. She listened for a while, and then as the organ grinder picked up his music box and moved on, she went back to her cleaning and cooking. And as she moved about she hummed a song.

CHAPTER X

A Broken Bubble

As Mrs. Rabinowitz was busying herself about the kitchen a young man drove up before the house in a taxi. The children in the street hurried forward, crowding around and opening the door, expectant of a few pennies reward. The young man jumped out, bringing with him a traveling bag and a cane. He paid his fare, handed some change to the children and walked briskly into the house. He knocked several times at the Rabinowitz apartment, but when he received no answer he tried the door. It opened and Jack Robin stepped into his old home for the first time in ten years.

Jack looked about him slightly puzzled. It all seemed so real, so familiar, yet so unreal. It was as though he were waking from some kind of strange dream. He set his bag and stick down on a chair, and straightened his tie. But his entrance brought Mrs. Rabinowitz from her kitchen. As she came into the room she stopped dead. Jack turned quickly, and mother and son faced each other. There was a moment's silence. Then——

"Mama! Mama!"

"Jakie! My baby! Mine zindel! My darling!"

Swift as a flash the two were in each other's arms, their voices breaking; smiles and tears coming alternately and together. At last Jack stepped back holding his mother at arms' length, and gazing at her face.

"Mama! You don't look a day older—just like a chicken." Jakie broke the tension with a jest, but his eyes were moist. He led his mother to a chair and gently pushed her into it.

"My baby! That I should live to see my Jakie again!" Mrs. Rabinowitz was wiping the tears from her eyes with the corner of her apron. "When did you come? Where have you been? Are you all right, Jakie?" The questions tumbled out disregarding any answers.

"Of course I'm all right, Mama," Jack laughed. "I just got off the train, and the first thing I did was to come down and see you and papa. How is papa? Where is he?"

"O, he's to the Synagogue. He will be back soon, and so glad he will be to see you," Mrs. Rabinowitz sighed.

"Is papa well?" Jack sat on the arm of his mother's chair, his arm about her.

"Yes, yes, thank God. Jakie, you will live here with us, no?"

"I'd love to, Mama, but I can't. I wired for a room at the hotel. I have to see some people uptown on business."

"Don't be foolish, Jakie," Mrs. Rabinowitz looked up at her son sternly. "For business you can go uptown, and for eating you can come here and eat your mama's cooking, and here you can sleep. I got your old bed just the way it was when you left and all your things is in your room the way you used to want them. Come, Jakie, and look." Mrs. Rabinowitz rose excitedly and picked up Jack's bag and started for his room.

"Here, Mama, what are you doing? Don't make yourself a baggage man." Jack gently took the bag from her hand and set it down again.

"But I want to put everything away so you'll know where they are," Mrs. Rabinowitz explained.

"If you put them away, Mama, I won't know where anything is," Jack pinched his mother's round cheek.

"Well, I want to see what you got," Mrs. Rabinowitz touched the bag with curious fingers.

"All right. I'll show you." Jack began to open his traveling bag. "See, Mama, that's an expensive bag. That's genuine pigskin. And look, Mama," he pulled out a pair of pajamas,

"see that? That's pajamas. Two parts. In the winter you can wear them both. And see this, Mama?" he took a dressing gown from the case. "That's a wrapper—for a man, see?"

Sara watched in awe the revelation of her son's belongings. They were so different from the things she had bought for him.

"Oh, what a big pocketbook!" she exclaimed as Jack took out a leather case.

"That's not a pocketbook. That's a picture," Jack explained, opening it.

"A picture from you?" Mrs. Rabinowitz reached for the case.

"No, I know how I look. What do I want of my picture. That's the girl I wrote you about, Mama. The one who did so many wonderful things for me. Look, Mama," Jack was attempting to turn the subject, "what do you think of these ties?" He held up several bright silk scarfs.

"It's a beautiful girl, Jakie," Mrs. Rabinowitz clung to the picture and refused to have her attention averted. "She lives in that house?" She pointed to the large pillared porch that appeared in the background. "She's got a husband, no?"

"No, not yet, Mama," Jack was stooping over his satchel and rummaging about in it so that the flush that mounted to his cheeks seemed

to come only from his exertions. "You see she was born in that big house. And then she came to New York to study singing, and now she's going to be a big star in a musical comedy. Look, Mama," Jack brought out a small package, "I got something for you. It's a surprise. Close your eyes and count. One, two, three, four, five, six, ninety, a dollar ten, a dollar twenty. Stop when you get to three dollars."

Obediently Mrs. Rabinowitz shut her eyes tightly and mumbled to herself. Jack unwrapped the box and touched the spring of the velvet jewelers' box.

"Now, open your eyes, Mama!"

"Diamonds! With stones in it!" Mrs. Rabinowitz threw up her hands and stared. "Jakie! Are you sure it's for your Mama?"

"Of course it is," Jack was removing the brooch and pinning it on his mother's bosom. "See, isn't that swell?"

"Jakie, where did you get all that money? You didn't do any wrong, did you?" Mrs. Rabinowitz touched the brooch with awed fingers.

"Don't worry, Mama, I got so much money Rockerfeller is jealous of me—and Henry Ford is always trying to borrow from me." He patted his mother's shoulder. "Gee, Mama, how everything looks natural. But you have made some improvements." Jack looked about

the room. "The same furniture—the same everything. Oh, and you've got a phonograph. I knew you were saving all those soap wrappers for something. But it's funny, too. When I used to try to remember this room when I was out on the road it seemed so big—and now, it looks so small. And you can still see the Synagogue windows. I remember the day I broke one."

"Oi, and I'll never forget how much it cost to fix it," Mrs. Rabinowitz rejoined smartly.

"Let's forget about that, Mama," Jack laughed. "Does the phonograph play?" He walked over to the machine and began to examine the records. "O, Mama, what expensive records—'Il Trovatore,' 'Pagliacci'! You haven't got 'Red Hot Mama,' have you?"

"'Hed Hot Mama?' What's that?" Mrs. Rabinowitz questioned in bewilderment.

"If you had a piano, I'd show you."

"Sure, we got a piano. The congregation presented it to your papa last year. It's in the front room."

"Ay, ay, ay, ay, ay! A piano! You've been holding out on me. First thing I know you'll be going to afternoon teas and dancing the Charleston."

"Jakie, you know papa would scold! Come see the piano."

Mother and son hurried off into the parlor,

and Mrs. Rabinowitz stood beaming while Jack admired the instrument.

"Look, Mama, I'll play you something." Jack twirled the piano stool about and sat down, running his fingers over the keys. He broke out into the jazz air, merrily thrumming the rhythmic beat and sounding out the words with all the fervor with which his appearance on the stage was identified.

"Jakie! Jakie! You mustn't! It ain't right." Mrs. Rabinowitz's hands went to her head as though to ward off the shock and horror she felt.

But neither of them in the excitement of the moment had heard the door open to admit the Cantor. And as he walked into the dining room he suddenly began to realize that these sacrilegious sounds were coming from within his own home. He threw his prayer book on the table and walked toward the parlor, his face set in grim determination. At that moment Jack and his mother entered the dining room.

"You'll like it, Mama, after you get used to it. I'll sing you a lot more," Jakie was laughing. But as he turned he came face to face with his father. Automatically he backed away. Then he forced a smile. "Why, hello, Papa!" He held out his hand.

The Cantor disregarded the proffered offer of friendship and took a step toward his son.

"What are you doing in my house?" he demanded sternly.

"Papa, it's your son, Jakie. He said 'Hello' to you," Mrs. Rabinowitz pleaded, gazing terrified from one to the other.

"What do you mean coming in my house and playing on my piano with your lowlife music!" the Cantor boomed.

"Why, Papa, I came home because I've been away for almost ten years, and I've made good, and I wanted to see you and mama again. I thought about you all the time I was away from home. And now, as soon as I got off the train I came right away to see you. I didn't mean any harm when I played that jazz. I just wanted Mama to hear it."

"Oi, du schagitz!" the Cantor shouted. "When you was a little boy I taught you to sing to God—to be a Cantor like your fathers. But you liked better to sing in the beer garden than in the temple. You're the same now!"

"Sure, Papa, I'm just the same," Jack hurried eagerly to explain, not fully understanding the purport of his father's words. "You taught me the prayer songs, and I sang them here for you. But when I got out on the street with the kids I sang their songs—and they're a lot alike—our songs and the street songs. Listen, Papa," Jack broke into the Hebrew prayer tone. "Ain Kelohenu."

With earnest beauty in his voice Jack sang the opening bars of the ancient chant. Then swiftly, and with the same yearning plaintiveness he broke out into modern jazz. It was only a new rhythm, a little shaking of the shoulders, and the old song was transformed into a popular tune. His father stared at him aghast.

"Don't you see, Papa? I just got them a little mixed." Jack looked anxiously at his father.

"Jakie! Where did you learn to sing like that?" Mrs. Rabinowitz fluttered between the two, anxiously attempting to quell the gathering storm, but unable to diplomatically straighten out matters.

"From Papa,—who else?" Jack answered, strong in his own beliefs. "Papa taught me to sing. But you must remember I'm American—Papa is of the Old World. That's all the difference there is between us. If Papa'd been born here he'd probably be singing jazz himself now."

"You shouldn't speak like this from a Cantor!" The old man shook his fists angrily at his son. "God will punish you—do you hear?"

"Yosele! Yosele! Look, supper is ready and Jakie is here, and we should be happy now," Mrs. Rabinowitz begged. "It's to-day

your birthday. Jakie, did you know your Papa is sixty years old?"

"Of course I know it, Mama. That's why I was so anxious to get home to-day. And then, when I got this chance, I thought I'd get home in time to help celebrate. I've planned on this for a long time, now. I thought you'd be glad to see me."

"We are glad, Jakie. See, I'm crying with happiness." Mrs. Rabinowitz wiped the tears from her eyes in proof of her statement.

"Yeh, and Papa's happy too," he smiled a trifle bitterly. "But I got you a birthday present, Papa." Jack crossed the room swiftly and brought a package from his bag, and unwrapped it quickly. "See, it's a prayer shawl. The very best I could get." He shook out the folds of the scarf and held it up. "Now, I'll make you a speech just like I used to when I was a little boy. Many happy returns of the day, Cantor Rabinowitz."

"See, Yosele," Mrs. Rabinowitz was pushing Jack toward his father, "it's just what you needed—a nice, new prayer shawl. And Jakie making you a speech like he was a little boy."

"Thank you," the Cantor's voice acknowledged the speech, but his eyes stared coldly before him, unseeing.

"See, it's a beautiful shawl, Papa," Mrs. Rabinowitz held out the garment for her hus-

band's inspection, but he paid no attention to her overtures. "And see what Jakie brought me—diamonds! Look, Yosele, a prayer shawl for the Papa and diamonds for the Mama."

"Sure, Papa, I'm making lots of money now," Jack decided to try another tack.

"Money—money! So do pickpockets make money!" The old man turned on his son in scorn.

"I'm no pickpocket, Papa, I'm an actor in the theater. Jack Robin—that's me. I sing songs."

"An actor in a theayter!" The Cantor turned in disdain and horror. "You tell this to me—me, who comes from five generations of Cantors! And you should make this holy singing in a theayter. I don't want no son of mine should be an actor. Not a Rabinowitz! Their work has been laid out for them by God."

"Where are you going to act, Jakie? Downtown here?" Mrs. Rabinowitz put her question fearfully.

"No, Mama, uptown. I act in English."

"What kind of English acting are you doing uptown?" the Cantor asked.

"Let's not talk about that now, Papa. I'll tell you all about it some other time."

"What kind English acting are you doing uptown?" the Cantor insisted.

"Look, Yosele, look at Jakie's bag—and so

many nice things he's got in it," Mrs. Rabinowitz fluttered nervously.

"No, Mama, not now. Some other time I'll show Papa."

"What kind English acting are you doing uptown, I'm asking you?" the Cantor persisted.

"It's hard to explain, Papa. Some other time——"

"It ain't hard I should tell you the kind of singing I do. I sing to God. I pray. Your Mama, she's a Cantor's wife. She worships God, too. *She* knows the sorrows what has come to the descendents from Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, to the children of Israel. Once she wanted to be the mother of a Cantor —but now she found it couldn't be. It ain't hard for us to tell you what kind of life we are living. What kind of life are you living?"

"But I'm telling you, Papa, I'm an actor. I sing—I sing jazz songs, ragtime. I'm a comedian. I get dressed up in funny clothes and make people laugh. And now I just got a wire to come to New York with a big producer to be in a show called 'The April Follies.' That means I've made good in my work. I thought you'd be so proud of me——"

"Proud! A jazz singer! O, my God in Heaven! Does it mean nothing to you the five generations of Cantors! Nothing that there is a God? You are no son of mine! I never want

to see you again!" Righteous, unbending, stern with following the Gaod of Vengeance for sixty years, the Canter pronounced his ultimatum.

"All right, all right," Jack turned hopelessly and began to close up his bag. "I've worked hard to get this opportunity. I come home—a success. I make money. I wanted to come home—I wanted to come back to all the things I loved—the East Side—the kids—my Mama—my Papa—the Synagogue—my work in the theater."

The Cantor, all unheeding, pointed to the door.

"Yosele, listen to Jakie—can't you hear he wants he should tell you something," Mrs. Rabinowitz pleaded tearfully. "Jakie, don't go." She seized her son's arm, but he patted her shoulder and continued his packing. "Jakie, tell your papa you're sorry—you're ashamed."

"Mama, I can't. It's my work, and I'm proud of it. But there won't be any more arguments around here on my account. I've been away for ten years and I can stay away some more. I'm not going to live down here and sing prayers that don't mean a thing to me. I never could do it. I must go, Mama. Don't cry. I'll call you up just as soon as I get to my hotel. Maybe some day Papa will understand

like you do." Jack kissed his mother, and in another second he was gone.

"Our Jakie is gone, Yosele," Mrs. Rabinowitz sank down into a chair.

"Did you heard how he sang?" the Cantor muttered. "The same like I taught him in the Synagogue—the same he used to sing to God—now he sings jazz." He stretched his hand forth on the table and picked up the prayer shawl dully. "A fine birthday present I got. Bought with dirty money made from the theayter. Burn it! Burn it!" He thrust the shawl from him with loathing.

"Yoselle, you're breaking my heart—and it's to-day your birthday. And I tried to be so happy."

"Happy! Happy! With a son like that!"

"Sure! Ain't it I'm trying to smile?" Mrs. Rabinowitz made a pitiful attempt but her voice broke. "Ain't it you are mine man—my Cantor?"

"Sara, you are a good wife, and you were a good mother—but you don't deserve such a son as you got."

The Cantor buried his face in his arms on the table.

CHAPTER XI

A Refrain Recaptured

Uptown in the Fulton Theatre the drab reality of a rehearsal was in progress. Four and twenty chorus girls backgrounded by nothing more inspiring than folded scenery leaning disinterestedly against dusty brick walls, and gowned in nothing more provocative than blouses and trunks, bathing suits and regulation rehearsal rompers, gyrated through their routine steps with lackadaisical precision. An upright piano to one side of the stage, before which was seated a musician, ground out a jazz tune over and over again until it lost heart and settled down into a monotonous jangling.

Out of the dim blackness of the auditorium rose rumblings of conversation, which meant that the author, the lyricist, the producer, the backer and the stars were each standing up for what he considered his rights. Stage hands in shirt sleeves lounged against the proscenium arch. Tiny flickers of lighted cigarettes rose and fell. Stale cigar smoke mingled with the odors of scrub women and soapy water. An old doorman, with feet propped up on a bit of painted rock, pulled dispiritedly on an un-

lighted pipe. "No smoking" signs hung disgruntled behind the rope lines of curtains and drops.

In and out, round and about, back and forth, across the stage the four and twenty girls moved, making vague attempts at shaking a tantalizing hip. But their only success seemed to lie in rousing a tantalizing ballet master.

"For the love of Pete! Stop! Stop!" The girls halted wearily. The music rambled on. Jim Sparks, coatless, sleeves uprolled, hair standing on end, leaped up from the orchestra pit over the footlights and onto the stage. "Shut that damned music off," he yelled. The pianist swung round on his stool and nonchalantly lighted a cigarette.

"Say, where th' hell do you think you are! At a funeral! My God! You'd make the best set of mourners I ever saw. A bunch of corpses! Put some pep in it. Shake yourself! Look here! Watch this!"

The chorus girls lounged to an indifferent attention while Sparks, humming the tune, twirled and pirouetted before them. He wriggled his hips; he fluttered his hands; he agitated his shoulders.

"Now, look!" he demanded. "Where it goes da-de-da-de-dade, move your right hip. Give it a quick jerk. Come on, try it again. Yeh, from the beginning," he turned to the pianist.

"And come on you!" he included all the members of the chorus in a sweeping gesture. "Get some life into it—and don't be afraid of busting anything. Let's go!"

As the music started Sparks backed away and the girls once more took up the steps, but now with an added vigor and interest. He turned to nod with approval at the three persons who had recently appeared in the wings and stood watching the group on the stage.

"This ought to be a good number, Harry." Mary Dale, in practice rompers and ballet slippers, turned to the tall, rather heavy man beside her.

"Well, Sparks'll get it out of those girls if it's to be got." Harry Lee, the producer of "April Follies," chewed ruminantly on his cigar. "Say, you put that check through today, didn't you, Randy?" He turned to the immaculately dressed, slightly youngish man beside him.

"Yes, I've attended to all that. You can draw on it at any time now," Randolph Dillings, whose money was helping to make the show possible, assented. "But, good Lord, Harry, can't you speed up that chorus a bit? They don't look as though they were ever going to be ready for a production."

"They're all right. Don't worry about them.

Sparks'll have that bunch hitting on all eight opening night, stepping high, wide and handsome. Sparks always trains them this way. I know. I've watched him work before," Lee assured his banker.

"Well, I don't want to interfere with your business," Dillings hastily protested. "You know best."

The three watched in silence the chorus work for a while. After a few moments Dillings turned his back so that Mary could not hear his words and spoke to Lee.

"Look here, Harry, what about that new comedian? Do you think that's going to work out all right?" he whispered.

Lee shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know. I'm taking a chance on him—we can always let him go if he doesn't look good, you know. And sometimes these finds are damned profitable. We've still got Carter up our sleeve, and he's good for carrying any amount of comedy—though it wouldn't be a bad idea at all to have some new stuff. Carter's getting a little worn out. He doesn't know it himself, and his name draws at the box office—but—" he shook his head, "it's new ideas we need."

"I suppose you're right. Well, I think I'll be running along," Dillings turned to Mary.

"Oh, why go so soon, Randy. I'm going into

my scene in just a minute if you want to stay and watch that," Mary smiled.

"I'd like to, but if I'm going to back shows I have to attend to my own business," Dillings laughed. "Shall I call for you about five?"

"What time will rehearsal be over, Harry?" Mary asked Lee.

"Oh, around five, I suppose. I'm not going to keep anyone much longer than that. We've got enough time and you've all been at it since eleven this morning."

"All right, then, Randy. I'll be ready at five. If you see Dad by any chance, tell him I'll be home later."

"Right-ho!" Dillings tucked his hat under his arm, picked up his stick, and departed by way of the stage entrance.

"Look here, Mary," Lee began nervously to consult his watch as soon as Dillings had disappeared, "it's about time that discovery of yours showed up. Do you know where he is?"

"Oh, he'll be aloang, all right. He just got in this afternoon, according to his wire, and I suppose he's gone to a hotel to change. I shouldn't worry."

"I know, but—well—I didn't want to do much talking in front of Randy for fear of getting him all upset, but are you sure that this chap can sing as well as Hal Bolton?"

"Look here, Harry, he's better than Bolton

—a thousand times better. You won't be sorry you took my advice. I'll wager you on that. And he's got a lot better stuff than Bolton has, and he knows how to put it over better than Bolton. If you don't like him, you can always get Bolton back."

"That's just the point, Mary, I can't. Bolton's signed up with the movies—just yesterday. I got that straight from Tom Wheeler. And this whole thing's got me a little upset. We've got two weeks ahead of us, I know, but I don't want to take any chances and have to stick some one in at the last moment."

"Wait until you hear this boy. You'll be featuring him all over the place the day after we open. I tell you, Harry, I heard him sing in 'Coffee Dan's' and it almost took my breath away. He's got something that none of these other 'Mammy' singers have—a personality combined with a voice that simply makes you choke. I don't know where he ever learned to sing that way, but it seems natural to him. I don't even know where he came from—he never told us anything about himself when we were on the road, but he's got 'it,' and a lot more."

As they talked a young man opened the stage door and entered the hallway.

"I'm Jack Robin," he informed the doorman, who hurried to bar the entrance of an outsider. "I want to see Mr. Lee."

"Oh, Robin—Robin—sure," the old man stepped aside to allow the singer to pass. "There's Mr. Lee over there. Do you know him when you see him?"

Jack shook his head.

"See that man over there in the gray suit with the cigar? That's him." The doorman pointed out the two figures in the wings.

But Jack had already seen Mary, and with a nod of thanks he hurried forward with outstretched hands.

"Mary!" he called, "Mary! Gee, it's great seeing you again." He caught the girl's hands in his and pressed them eagerly.

"Well, I'm frightfully glad to see you," Mary's face lighted up. "Mr. Lee's just been worrying his head off at your failure to appear. Harry—Mr. Lee, may I present Mr. Robin?"

The two shook hands and acknowledged the meeting with formal words. But instinctively Jack liked the man before him, and mentally he agreed with Mary's description of him as being a "frightfully nice person."

"When did you get in, Jack," Mary asked.

"Why—not so long ago—just this afternoon. I—I went up to the hotel first, and that kept me for a while. I wanted to unpack a few things. As soon as I did that I came right on over here." Jack was trying to account for the time he had spent at his home, and succeeded.

"But, Mary, I want to thank you for sending for me. I can't tell you how much——"

"That's all right, Jack. Let's not talk about it right now. I'll see you later and we can——"

"Here's your script," Lee finished sorting out the bundle of manuscripts under his arm and handed the part book to Jack. "You'd better listen in on the rehearsals to-day and take your cues—read it. And then see what you can get done to-night. We've only got two weeks more."

"Thank you," Jack took the script and glanced over it. "I'll see what I can do by to-morrow."

"I'll give you the songs later. Can't seem to find them here. I probably left them in the office."

"I'm sure it won't take me very long to learn them, Mr. Lee," Jack assured the producer earnestly. "I'll work hard on them."

"Well, you've been very highly recommended," Lee turned to Mary with a rueful smile, "But we've only got one person's word for it that you can deliver."

"I've been telling him all afternoon to stop worrying about you," Mary declared emphatically, "but he still insists on being very serious over this matter."

"O, but I'm sure I can play this part, Mr. Lee," Jack insisted enthusiastically.

"Huh!" Lee growled good-humoredly, "If you don't, I'm sunk, because two weeks isn't so very long, and if this doesn't get over Dillings will be out a bunch of jack. Wait, I want you to meet Carter—Bob Carter, you know, the comedian? He's in the show. Hey, Carter. Can you come here a minute?"

A tall gray-haired man with cynically wistful eyes who was quietly hoofing over in one corner stopped dancing and looked up. He crossed behind the chorus at Lee's call and the manager introduced the two.

"Robin here's going to take over that part Bolton had," Lee explained to the older comedian.

"That's fine," Carter shook hands with Jack. "Where've you been playing? Have I seen you before?"

"I don't think so, Mr. Carter," Jack began.

"Mr. Robin has just come in from Chicago," Mary explained hastily. "He was with the 'Little Follies' act out there and has been touring the West for some time."

"O, I see. Well, this looks like a pretty good show," Canter smiled at Lee. "Hope you like us. If I can do anything let me know."

"Thanks," Jack grinned happily.

"I want to run through that Dixie scene today. You come in there—you can just read the part," Lee explained to Jack. "Clear the

stage for the Dixie scene, Gene,'' he turned to the stage manager who also played the rôle of detective in the show. ''Is everybody concerned in the Dixie scene here?'' he called loudly.

The chorus girls now at rest lined up about the stage. The principals drifted on leisurely and took their positions.

''Everybody concerned in the Dixie scene stand by,'' the stage manager was calling. ''Hy! Miss Glynn—Dixie scene!'' he beckoned to a girl moving about in the wings and who came running on at his summons.

''Now, all I want to get this afternoon are entrances and exits and positions,'' Lee crossed the stage and sat down in a chair beside the assistant stage manager who was holding the script for prompts.

''Oh, Mary, but it's good to see you again. Don't run away right now,'' Jack begged as soon as Lee was out of hearing.

''I'm not running away, but I've got to go on in just a minute now,'' Mary laughed delightedly. ''There—Carter's on——''

'' 'Mr. Carruthers, I'm from headquarters and I tell you—' '' Jack could hear Carter's voice rattling off the lines.

''Mary, can't you have dinner with me tonight. It seems so long since I've seen you, and I want to hear all about everything,'' Jack

caught Mary's hand and held it closely.

"'And what's more, he has been very disrespectful to your daughter, Gwendolyn,'" Carter was continuing though Jack was paying little attention to what was happening on the stage.

"Will you, Mary? That is, if you haven't made any other arrangements," Jack amended hastily, fearing that he might have been too demanding.

"'Gwendolyn, come here!'" The stage manager was picking up his cue.

"I might consider it," Mary looked up at Jack mischievously.

"'Gwendolyn, come here!' That's your cue, Miss Dale," the stage manager looked for Mary.

"O, sorry," Mary ran out and took her place. "'Yes, father,'" she gave her line.

Jack, his eyes intent on the girl, moved back stage and found a prop chair out of the way and sat down and waited. He watched her move about, caught the charmingly graceful curves of her body as she walked back and forth under Lee's direction. No wonder, Jack thought, Lee had chosen her for the lead. She was by far the loveliest there among the bevy of girls picked mainly because of their beauty. So absorbed was he that he looked startled when he heard his name being called.

"Robin! Where is Robin! That's your cue," Lee was calling.

Jack jumped up hurriedly and came forward, leafing over his script.

"'Gus, where've you been.' There, that's it," the stage manager was helping him find the place and Jack began running over his lines and listening to Lee's directions as to his positions. But all the time he was waiting for Mary to say that she would go to dinner with him.

Mary was trying to do a little quick thinking. And for that reason she had delayed purposely in saying "yes" or "no" to Jack. But she was as impetuous as she was determined. And it was that impetuosity that had made her pick Jack from the crowd in San Francisco and that same determination that had made her see him through and give him his chance on Broadway. And so by now she had made up her mind. As soon as she was off the scene she ran over to Lee and whispered to him.

"Harry, will you do something for me?" she asked. "When Randy comes will you tell him that I've taken Jack out with me because I want to go over his part with him and explain the play?"

"Hey, what's this all about?" Lee looked up at the girl beside him.

"Now, don't ask any questions, Harry, there's a dear. Just be a nice person and give him that message."

"All right, I'll tell him, but don't blame me——"

"No one's going to blame you for anything," she laughed, and danced off to capture Jack from the other side of the stage as soon as he had finished his part.

CHAPTER XII

The Eternal Song

Another week of hard, pounding, grinding rehearsals. But the show was beginning to take shape and form and Harry Lee was going about with a smile on his face and a firm belief in his heart that he had a production. Everything was running fairly smoothly and there seemed to be little now that could mar the success of the venture. He felt that he had a real find in Jack and thus far he had kept his knowledge pretty much to himself with the idea of saving it for an explosive bomb on the opening night. So he sat back and directed easily and earnestly.

"Look, Harry." During a lull in the scene Mary was showing Lee one of the sketches for her costumes. "Don't you think it would look a lot better if these plumes were moved over here to the left?" She pointed out a decoration of feathers on the costume. "I'd feel much more comfortable with them there, and if you don't mind I'll ask the costumer the next time I have a fitting——"

She was interrupted, as was everyone who

A Warner Bros. Production.

THE REHEARSAL OF THE SHOW THAT WILL BRING JACK FAME.

The Jazz Singer.

tried to say two words to Lee during rehearsals, by the stage doorman.

"Mr. Lee, Mr. Dillings just phoned and said I was to tell you he'd be around this afternoon sometime," the old man turned and hobbled back to his chair in the hallway.

"Thanks, Jimmy," Lee called after him. "No, I don't mind—you can move the plumes where you want them, if the artist doesn't kick," Lee smiled up wearily at Mary.

But Mary was frowning. She had forgotten the costume for the moment and was busy with other problems.

"What's the matter with Randy, Harry. He seems to be dogging your footsteps lately. Has he been saying anything to you about Jack—and me?"

"O, more or less," Lee admitted. "As a matter of fact he's been after me to let Jack go."

"He wanted you to let Jack go? Well, whatever for? That's perfectly silly."

"He seems to be upset over you, that's all."

"Over me, why?"

"Jealousy, for one thing."

"Randy has no right to control me or my actions. Besides, he's never even met Jack," Mary flared up excitedly. "And furthermore, he shouldn't be bothering you about any private affairs. You like Jack's work, and

that's the main thing that matters in any case."

"My dear child, you can't tell an 'angel' that. Every person who ever puts ten cents in a show thinks he has a perfect right to direct the entire production, whether he's ever been any nearer the stage than the last row in the balcony. After all, don't let it worry you. You'll probably be all right. I've beat off so many backers before that one more or less won't faze me. Run along and attend to your costume."

Mary "ran along" as far as the other side of the stage, but there she found Jack assiduously studying lines and she sat down beside him for a few moments.

"Say, this is a pip of a song, Mary," Jack exclaimed. "Look!" He hummed over the words, beating time with his fingers. "Don't tell me that's not going to catch on."

"Let me see. O, is that the new one Harry was getting ready for you? That *is* good."

They sat there side by side going over the tune until they were interrupted by Lee and a brisk, vibrating young man who oozed exuberance from every pore.

"Mary, you know Mr. Forbes. Jack, this is Franklyn Forbes, our publicity man—Jack Robin," Lee introduced them. "Go ahead, Forbes, and see what you can get. Forbes

wants to get some kind of a stunt story on you, Jack."

"First off, I want you to tell me the story of your life—where you were born and how and why," Forbes pulled a stubby pencil from the inner depths of his coat and searched about for a piece of paper. "And what you've played in before and all that sort of thing."

Jack looked at Forbes a little hesitatingly and at Mary a little uncertainly. His mind responded to the questions quickly enough, but he caught himself before he answered. Suppose he told Mary his background, his history —would it make any difference to her? He knew something of her life and her family, and the contrast his own would make might prove to be distasteful to a girl whose own status in society was so far removed, in its way, from his own.

"O, say that I was born of poor but honest parents and my life has been one long struggle for success, and I've played every kind of comedy known to man, but my one desire is to be a tragedian and do 'Hamlet.'" In his anxiety to cover his hesitancy to answer Jack was playing the flippant wise-cracker.

"Listen, Jack, Forbes wants to get this story out. Come on and give him the facts," Lee broke in impatiently.

"Why not write something about Jack's

method of putting over a jazz song," Mary suggested helpfully. "Something about how he feels when he's singing. You know, he has a sort of religious intensity, Harry, when he sings."

"Sure, that's good," Forbes heartily commended the idea. "But I want to get some kind of a background to hang a story on—I don't much care what, just as long as it has some color. I'll make up the rest. You won't have to bother."

"All right, you go ahead, then, and make up anything you want," Jack drew a sigh of relief as he thought himself well away from these forced revelations. "Anything you say will be O. K. with me. I won't call you a liar after it comes out in the papers."

"Well, that's all right, then, as long as you don't care," Forbes agreed cheerfully, and not at all unanxious to be able to make up his own story, for he had found the life histories of most theatrical people to be so much the same that he had to use all his ingenuity anyhow. Added to which most of them became very much upset when he introduced a few of his own deft touches, the lack of which would have kept the story out of any paper. "I'll just stick in a few lines about the East Side—probably a singing waiter in a Bowery dive—pious father—objects to stage——"

"No-o-o," Jack started nervously at Forbes' words. "I don't think you'd better do that. It wouldn't be so good anyhow. Too common."

"But it's got a lot of color and it usually works," Forbes insisted.

"Well, I don't like it," Jack was becoming obstinate, now.

"Go ahead and write anything you like, Forbes," Lee spoke sharply.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Lee," Jack looked pitifully toward Mary for help. "I don't want to be mean, only I'm—I'm rather sensitive about my childhood—O, not that there was anything wrong with it, but—but——"

Mary sensed some trouble, and she rather suspicioned what was going on in Jack's mind. "Look here, Mr. Forbes, why not do my discovery of Jack out in 'Frisco. He was singing in a Café and I had never heard anything quite like it before——"

"Sure, that's all right. Go ahead." Forbes began jotting down notes on the back of an envelope while Mary embroidered her story.

"You go ahead and fix this story up with Forbes, Mary," Lee interrupted. "I want Jack to go over that new song. We'll be over there," he pointed across the stage, "if you want any help."

Mary nodded and the two crossed to the wings and began a rehearsal. As she talked

Dillings came in from the stage entrance and waited until Forbes had finished his interview before he interrupted. When the publicity man had concluded his questions and taken his leave Dillings sat down beside Mary.

"I haven't seen you for some time," he began quite formally.

"O, I've been working like a dog, Randy. I'm sorry. But these days life is just one rehearsal after another, and by the time I get to bed at night I'm so tired I simply flop. What have you been doing?"

"Nothing in particular—a little bridge at the club. I thought I would take a look in this afternoon and see how things were going. What are you doing to-night?"

"Rehearsing, as usual."

"What about dinner?"

"I'm going just to snatch a quick bite—and I told Jack Robin I'd run around the corner to the Chop House with him. By the way, you haven't met Jack, yet, have you?" Mary had decided to take matters into her own hands. "He's over there with Harry. Jack! Yoo-hoo!" She motioned for Jack to come over without waiting for any answer from Dillings.

"Jack, I want you to meet Mr. Randolph Dillings. Randy, this is Mr. Jack Robin."

"How do you do, Mr. Dillings," Jack started to hold out his hand cordially, but on receiving

no answering gesture from the other man, he dropped back, somewhat abashed.

"How do you do," Dillings answered coldly and looked away, furious at Mary for forcing him into this uncomfortable situation and not a little hurt at the faintly hidden smile that played over her face as she glanced back and forth between the two.

"It's a nice day," Jack said at length, making another attempt at friendliness. But Dillings was staring straight ahead.

"I said it's a nice day," Jack repeated looking at Mary despairingly.

"Yes, Jack, it *is* a *beautiful* day," Mary sent a wicked smile in Dillings' direction.

"Thank God, *that's* settled," Jack looked about nervously. But since this man was a friend of Mary's he decided to make one last stand. "You know, Mr. Dillings, Mary has spoken of you so often that I almost feel as though I know you."

"I'm sorry, Mary, but I've got to run along," Dillings turned to the girl and bowed stiffly.

"Good-by, Randy," Mary walked halfway across the stage out of earshot of Jack. "I know you don't mean all this, so—see you more or less anon." She turned on her heel and went back to Jack who had retired to a corner and was gazing mournfully after the departing figure.

"That's the 'angel' of this show, isn't it? Jack questioned Mary. "I don't think he's very strong for me."

"That's all right, Jack," Mary placated him. "Don't mind him—he's an old friend of mine —and the family's. He's quite frightfully rich, but just a bit old-fashioned. He didn't really mean to be rude, I know that. He's a good sort. He got together with Lee and talked about me, and that's one reason I'm here."

"He—he's quite stuck on you, isn't he?"

"We were engaged once—but it was all broken off some time ago. O, he's still interested, but—" Mary shrugged her shoulders disinterestedly.

"Anyhow, I admire his taste," Jack sighed.

"Do you really?" Mary looked up with round, provocative eyes.

"Ah—er—," Jack backed away, "are you going out with him to-night?"

"Why, no, I thought we were going to dinner together," Mary smiled.

"O, that's all right, then," Jack answered, with a sigh of relief. "I didn't know whether you had forgotten or not."

"No, I hadn't. I think we might as well go now," Mary consulted her wrist watch. "It's almost six, and we've got to be back by eight. Whew! I'm tired. I'd like to take a little walk and get some fresh air."

"Let's do that, Mary," Jack assented eagerly, his hurt and anxiety quickly banished. "I'll get washed up and meet you here in about ten minutes."

They departed for the dressing rooms, and in less than the appointed time Jack was impatiently pacing the darkened stage. But he did not wait long before Mary appeared in street clothes and the two went out into the evening arm in arm.

"I'm beginning to feel hungry," Mary decided after they had walked along Broadway amid jostling crowds of the dinner hour. "Let's eat."

"All right. Where?"

They discussed restaurants for a few moments and then turned back and walked until they found their favorite café. Inside, seated at a wall table for two they ordered, and Mary began to talk of the trivialities of the day. But Jack responded with such half-hearted vagaries that she looked at him with a puzzled frown.

"Jack, are you worried about anything? You seem so morbid," she questioned tenderly.

"Well, yes, in a way," Jack admitted. "I'm worrying about you."

"About me? O, Jack, why?" Mary laughed.

"I can't help it, Mary. Don't you see that I feel that I have so much to thank you for—

and if I don't make good in this show, somehow you're going to be the goat. You and Mr. Lee. You've both done everything for me—and I don't even know whether I can repay you by just making a success of myself. For my own sake—for a lot of reasons, Mary, I've simply got to put this across. But that has nothing to do with you. And if I don't do this for your sake I'll feel—well, I'll feel like hell."

"Jack! Snap out of it! You're going to be the hit of the show. You're just a bit tired, now, that's all that's the matter with you. Why, we're all going to be so proud of you." She reached across the table and patted his hand.

"No, there'll be some people who won't," he shook his head sadly, but he clung to the girl's hand as though he never wanted to let it go.

"You mean your family? You've never spoken of them, so I—I rather imagined you had quarreled."

"Yes, you see they wanted me to be something entirely different. To them the stage is just the same as jail. I'm an only son, and—and—well, they don't think I'll ever amount to anything."

"My dear boy, that's an old, old story. Don't you know that there are millions of people who feel that same way about the theater. And as for parents—Jack, there is nothing more selfish than the way in which parents

attempt to direct their children's lives. They call it love—but it's a purely selfish wish to see in their children a recreation of what they, themselves might have been or would like to be. My father and mother objected to my career—but they got over it. And now they're proud of me. Forget all this, Jack. You're going to be a great success."

"Mary, do you—do you really think so? You're so wonderful." He leaned across the table and gazed into Mary's eyes. "If—if I am a success, Mary, there's something I'd like to tell you."

"Well, why wait until then? It's a whole week off."

Mary's face was upturned; her red lips were close to his; never before had she seemed so tremendously desirable; so irresistible. There was that funny little turn-up to her nose; that amazing quirk of the eyebrows that seemed always to give her an expression of surprise; and that adorable curve to her sensitive mouth. Jack had to speak.

"I—I suppose you think I'm out of my head," he blundered, "but—but I'm crazy about you, Mary. I was going to wait until I knew where I stood before I spoke, but I couldn't help it. You look so beautiful—you're so sweet."

"But I'm crazy about you, Jack," Mary

looked directly and sincerely at the man across the table from her.

"Mary! You don't understand—you don't know what I mean," Jack was floundering in his amazement.

"Well, what *do* you mean?" Mary smiled.

"I mean that I love you—I want to marry you—someday——"

"That's what I thought you meant, Jack."

"Mary!"

A dark shadow came between them. "Beg pardon, sir, the soup."

CHAPTER XIII

Gray, Gathering Storms

Another week of grilling work wherein Mary and Jack had little time either for themselves or for their new-found happiness. Several numbers were added at the last moment; old sketches were relegated to limbo. Day in and day out, night after night in the theater going over and over again the same lines, the same songs, the same dances. Everyone was tired; tempers were running on the ragged edges; one of the chorus girls had sprained an ankle and someone to fill her place had to be recruited and trained in double-quick time. Opening "cold" on Broadway, the mechanism must be made to run smoothly for the delectation of the critical and temperamental first-nighters without an out-of-town try-out.

Lee had sent everyone home in the early hours of the morning with strict injunctions to appear at two o'clock the following afternoon to run through a final dress rehearsal before the opening that night. Now with feverish activity the stage hands were shifting scenery, getting it into proper placement for quick changes, hanging drops and trying them. Elec-

tricians, their hands full of tools, wires and bulbs, were putting the lights up and down, experimenting with color effects, timing the various degrees of luminosity for each sketch. The wardrobe mistress rushed from one dressing room to another taking last-minute stitches in costumes.

In the midst of the chaos Lee was calling loudly for the participants in the Dixie sketch.

"Come on, everybody," he was shouting. "Mary—Jack, we've got to run through this scene before dress rehearsal. I think we'll make some changes. No chorus, only the principles. This is our last chance, now, so get it right."

The little group took their places, some already in costume, others still in their street clothes.

"Come on, Gene, take it from: 'Gus, where've you been,'" Lee directed the stage manager-detective.

"'Gus, where've you been?'" began the detective, picking up his line.

"'Boy, I been followin' that swallow, an' the last I seen of it, it was headin' due south,'" Jack took his cue.

"'But swallows don't go south this time of year,'" Carter stepped forward on his line.

"'Heh! They suttinly does when this yere

black boy's tippin' the bottle,' " Jack answered.

"Now, that's the cue for my 'Cotton Gin' number, Mr. Lee. Do you want me to take it without the chorus?" Carter asked.

"No, that's one reason I wanted to run over this scene," Lee began. "I've been thinking about it, and I've decided that Jack had better do that number. It's Southern stuff and a black-face make-up fits it better."

"But, Mr. Lee," Carter objected, his professional pride asserting itself, "that's where I do my specialty. It's the best number I have."

"Sorry, Carter," Lee tried to smooth over matters, "but I want this done as a real snappy Southern skit."

"Well, Mr. Lee, I've got enough numbers now," Jack interrupted nervously, "and Carter's had all the rehearsals on it."

"That's all right. You know the song. You can carry another number all right. Now, I want it done like this," Lee was hurrying along the scene without further ado. "Stand back, all of you. Jack, you're down front here." The principals moved toward the rear of the stage and Jack took his position in front of the footlights beside Lee. "This is a big number," he spoke quietly to Jack. "I want you to get everything out of it that's in it. You can do it. That's why I'm giving you this chance. You're not nervous about it, are you?"

"No-o-o," Jack confessed.

"All right, then. I'm going to have nothing down stage here but the spot on you. It'll be your number if you carry it through the way you're doing this other stuff. You don't need to take it now. But you understand what I want?"

"Yes, I see, Mr. Lee."

"Jack, that's going to be wonderful," Mary watching from the wings, now moved up beside Jack as Lee began giving directions to the others. "It looks very much as though it's going to be *your* show. Harry's giving you everything."

"I know it, Mary, and it almost gets me scared," Jack admitted. "I swear, I lay awake having nightmares about it. Suppose I didn't get over."

"No fear, Jack," Mary laughed and slipped her hand inside Jack's. "You're going to be the whole show. Harry knows what he's doing."

Yet right at that moment it was not his own feelings that Jack was considering. He was nervous, true, but with the nervousness that is peculiar to almost every actor on an opening night. It was something other than that. He was worrying because he believed that if he failed it would be a reflection, as he had told Mary, on her judgment and Lee's. And added to that he felt that in order to prove to both

Mary and his father his ability he *must* show that he had real worth in the theater. But at the same time the scene between Carter and Lee had made him realize the hurt the elder comedian was sustaining. So it was with mingled sensations that he caught Carter's words to the producer.

"Look here, what's the big idea," he could hear Carter saying. "I've worked up that number all through rehearsals. The house is going to be packed to-night with *my* friends, and they're expecting to see a lot of me. What do you think they're going to spread around Broadway to-morrow?"

"Just a minute, Mary," Jack squeezed the girl's hand and hurried over toward the producer. "Mr. Lee," he began, "I'd much rather Carter kept that 'Cotton Gin' number. He's an old song-and-dance man and he knows how to get that sort of thing across."

"Losing your nerve, Jack?' Lee turned on the young songster severely. "Don't you want this opportunity?"

"Of course, I do, Mr. Lee. But I'm thinking about the success of your show."

"I'll worry about that. You don't have to. We go through dress rehearsal the way I told you. Gene, get everybody lined up for the opening number." He turned on his heel abruptly and went over to the stage manager.

"Well, I've been on the stage for forty years and I've never had anything like this happen before. I'm through," Carter mumbled bitterly.

"Aw, listen, Carter, don't get sore now," Jack pleaded. "Wait until to-morrow—Lee'll probably be only too glad to give you your own number and all mine, too. Listen, I've got an idea for a new scene for us, and I'm going to ask Lee if we can use it. Come on over here and I'll tell you about it." He led the way to where Mary was waiting and drew her arm through his. "Mary, what do you think of this for a scene for Carter and me." He began to explain his sketch, trying to take away some of the sting of Carter's hurt.

As the three stood deep in discussion Dillings sauntered in from the wings. He glanced across the stage and remarked the conference, and Jack and Mary's friendly attitude was by no means lost on the banker. But neither of them noticed him, absorbed as they were, and as he turned to find Lee they were both hurrying toward the dressing rooms to get into their costumes.

Lee was leaning over the assistant stage manager's table busily making changes in the manuscript before him when he was interrupted by an: "Hello, Harry." He turned and looked up.

"Oh, hello, Randy. Come to see the rehearsal?" he said, smiling vaguely.

"No,—I came to see you, personally. I'd rather talk to you alone, if you don't mind. Can't we go up to your office?"

Lee frowned. "I've got to stay here, Randy. We're starting rehearsal in just about two minutes. What's eating you?"

"Well, to come right down to the point it's Mary and Jack Robin."

"But we've gone over all that before, Randy. I explained my position and Mary's. Why bring it up again?"

"Very well, Harry, if you don't care to discuss it, that suits me. I have my own ideas on the subject, and after thinking the matter over I've decided to take my money out of the show."

"My God, Randy, you can't do that now!" Lee straightened up and scratched his head, puzzled. "Why, you're a banker. You can't do business that way. Do you realize that the show goes on to-night—and you want to take your money out this afternoon!"

"I realize that," Dillings spoke coldly. "But I'm not concerned with the theatrical business, and you know quite as well as I do that I didn't put money into the show because I was looking for profit. I put it in because of my interest in Mary—and I wanted to see her

given her proper chance. Of course, you know that we were engaged once, and until this Robin person appeared on the scene I still hoped——"

"Good Lord! Robin hasn't anything to do with this!"

"So far as I'm concerned I believe he has. It's a pity that such an occurrence should have arisen. Mary's family would be greatly upset if this affair became really serious. However, that's neither here nor there. As I said before, I had hoped that Mary might change her mind, but now—" Dillings shrugged his shoulders. "I'm no stage door Johnny. I've carried this matter quite as far as I care to under the circumstances. From now on what Mary chooses to do is her own business. So if you don't mind, just mail me a check this afternoon and we'll forget all about it."

"But you're not actually taking this boy seriously!" Lee exclaimed. "Why, he's nothing but a kid. I think he's going to make a good actor—but——"

"You and Mary seem to take him seriously enough," Dillings retorted. "Mary's friends are already gossiping. So far as I'm concerned I have nothing against the boy. I've only met him casually. But he's certainly not Mary's sort. However, if he's worth more to you than my money——"

"Well," Lee hesitated, considering the mat-

ter. Then he became determined. "Yes, I believe he is," he answered decisively.

"Very well," Dillings turned to go.

"Just a moment," Lee spoke quickly, laying a detaining hand on Dillings' arm. "Gene!" he called. "Gene! Ask Miss Dale to come here a moment," he told the stage manager who came out of the wings at his summons.

"Look here," Dillings drew himself up haughtily. "I don't care to have Miss Dale brought into this discussion."

"We're going to settle this right now," Lee declared firmly. "I'll prove to you—just for your own satisfaction—that Jack Robin doesn't mean a thing in Mary Dale's life. And if I do that, will you let things rest as they are?"

The two men faced each other. Dillings inwardly seethed at this new turn of affairs. Proud, autocratic, he could not help but think that this was a matter to be conducted between gentlemen—that it was totally unnecessary and not particularly subtle to ask a woman to declare or air her affections before the world, even though that world consisted of but three interested parties. Furthermore, he believed that as long as Mary felt as she did there was no point in causing her the embarrassment of stating her attitude toward himself.

Lee, however, wanted matters settled, and settled immediately. With him this was all a

business proposition. He was accustomed to dealing with those varieties of "angels" who were either backing wives or sweethearts, and it was no new proposition to have to deal with this sort of thing. So far as he was concerned Mary might have been a princess of the royal blood, and he would still have acted on the situation in this same manner. He was always direct, firm and decisive, and now he was behaving as he would in any business affair. But neither man was guessing aright as to Mary's attitude.

"Hello, Randy," the girl swung across the stage in a shimmering gown that revealed her lithe, perfect figure to best advantage.

"Hello, Mary," Dillings bowed. "I just ran in for a moment to see how things were going. I—I" he turned as though to go, "I have some business to attend to. You'll pardon me." He was attempting to evade this, to him, obnoxious scene.

"Just a moment," Lee caught Dillings' arm and turned him about. "Look here, Mary, Randy thinks you're in love with Jack Robin, and——"

"And so he's taking his money out of the show," Mary gazed serenely from one to the other. "I must say it's charming of you to discuss my private affairs," she began to wax sarcastic.

"Well, you see, Mary," Lee attempted an explanation, "I've been trying to tell Randy that Jack means nothing to you except, of course——"

"See here, Harry, I asked you—" Dillings began, but he was cut short by Mary, who was smiling superciliously, and being very feminine.

"Except what, Harry?" she turned with the suave grace of a jungle panther about to spring. "Oh, you don't have to tell me," she stopped Lee's explanations with a gesture of her hand. "I understand. You, Randy, you're acting on what you call principle. And Harry, you're just determined to settle matters. Very well. I suppose what you're both waiting for me to say is that Jack Robin means nothing to me at all except as a fellow performer." She stopped as she saw Lee nodding eagerly and Dillings looking expectantly. Then she pulled a little face, and, half amused, continued. "Well, I'm sorry that I can't say that—or, perhaps, it would be better to say that I'm glad."

"I'm sorry this had to happen," Dillings picked up his stick and settled his coat.

"Does this mean you're going to be in a fix for money, Harry?" Mary turned to Lee.

Lee grinned ruefully. "Oh, I'm always in a

fix for money. But this show goes on to-night if it breaks me."

"Harry, you're a darling," Mary reached out impulsively and patted Lee's arm.

"No, just a business man," Lee said, and smiled at the girl beside him.

"Oh, there's Jack!" Mary waved to the boy back in the wings and beckoned. "Jack! Come here!" she called.

A grotesque figure in trousers four times too large and a coat four times too small ambled on with a true negro lethargy. But as Jack caught sight of Dillings he hesitated, and looked blankly from Mary to Lee. He wasn't anxious to meet the banker again after his last experience, yet he didn't know whether or not there was some reason for his being called. So he smiled and spoke. Dillings returned the greeting with a curt nod and turned to Mary.

"I'm sorry, but I must go. Goodby," he started for the stage door.

"Will I see you again?" Lee turned with Dillings.

"Sorry, but I'm afraid I won't have time," the banker stalked across the stage.

Jack looked after the departing figure and tipped his hat with mock solemnity. But the quip brought Mary and Lee out of their serious mood, and they laughed.

"You know, I just got a hunch that he

don't like me," Jack shook his head sadly. "Maybe he thinks I wear these clothes on the street."

They laughed again and Lee went back to his manuscript. Mary sat down nearby on a trunk with Jack beside her.

"I'm sorry, Mary, if I'm causing you or Mr. Lee any trouble," Jack took the girl's hand in his and caressed it tenderly. "I know something must have been happening this afternoon or Mr. Dillings wouldn't have looked as though he had been eating lemons."

"That's all right, Jack. Don't worry about him. You've got a lot more things to think about."

"I know, but somehow he does worry me. I —I suppose he doesn't exactly approve of me." Jack stared quite gloomily out into the semi-lighted auditorium. "I suppose he doesn't think I'm good enough for you."

"Jack! Hush!" Mary put her hand over the boy's mouth. "You mustn't say such things."

"Well, there's one comfort in that, anyhow," Jack sighed. "I don't know any man who *is* good enough for *you*, Mary."

"Don't you, Jack?" she moved closer to him.

"No, I don't. He slipped his arm about her waist. They sat swinging their feet against the trunk for a few silent moments. "I—I love

you so much, Mary." He brushed the tip of her ear with his lips.

"Everybody ready for the first act!" Lee signaled the orchestra. "Overture! Overture!"

CHAPTER XIV

Between Two Fires

The orchestra sounded the opening notes of the overture, picking up the threads of the most outstanding song numbers of the show. The house was dark. Behind the lowered curtain Gene was frantically clearing the stage for action. The chorus girls were lined up in the wings waiting to dance on, marking time, getting in step with the music. There was a tense air of expectancy. Lee chewed nervously on his cigar and prayed fervently that nothing more would happen—at least until after the final curtain that night. So far as he could see there wasn't anything more that *could* happen. So he breathed a kind of sigh of relief and signaled for the rise of the curtain. The girls bounded out before the footlights.

Jack stood in the wings with Mary watching the beginning of the dress rehearsal. It was still some time before either of them went on. Both were already dressed, although Jack had not yet assumed his black-face make-up. They were as anxiously on the qui vive as was Lee himself. And both looked hopelessly pathetic when several of the girls fumbled a cue and

Lee blew his whistle sharply to stop the dance and send them back to take the number again. It was a bad start, but a bad dress rehearsal, in theatrical lore, means a good opening performance, so everybody gave the superstition the benefit of the doubt.

As the chorus once more took the same number the doorman lumbered up to Jack with a card in his hand. He held it out toward the singer.

"He's asking for Jakie Robin—is that you? He says his name's Yedelson, or something like that. Do you know him?" The doorman questioned.

Jack read the card: Yudelson, Dealer in Diamonds and Jewelry. "Yudelson! Of course I know him!" he exclaimed. "That's all right, Jimmy, he's looking for me. Tell him to come on in. He's a friend of mine."

Jimmy turned away and met Moisha Yudelson already wandering dazedly toward the lights on the stage.

"Here, this way," he called. "Mr. Robin's over here." He led the elderly Jew to Jack.

"Mein Gott, Jakele! I wouldn't knowed you such a big boy you are," Yudelson caught both Jack's hands and pumped them up and down vigorously.

"Well, well! Yudelson! How did you get here?" Jack attempted to break in.

"Such a trouble I have finding you!" Yudelson was running on excitedly. "First I ask for Jakie Rabinowitz—I forget you changed it your name, and he says he didn't know you," he pointed after the retreating figure of the doorman, "and then I remember your mama told me I should ask for Jakie Robin, and he says——"

"Yudelson!" Jack shook the man to a stop. "You say my mama told you to ask for Jakie Robin? Did mama send you here? What's the matter," he questioned, frantic.

"Nein, nein, Jakie, your mama is all right. She told me to ask you—she asked I should say to you—," Yudelson looked around at Mary significantly, and then drew closer to Jack. "I want I should see you in person," he whispered.

"Oh, I see," Jack looked at Mary and laughed. "That's all right, Yudelson. This is Miss Mary Dale, Mr. Yudelson," he introduced the two. "Miss Dale is the leading lady in this show."

"How do you do, Mr. Yudelson," Mary shook hands with the jeweler.

"It's a pleasure I should meet you," Yudelson clasped Mary's hand gravely, and looked sidewise at Jack. So this was the girl about whom Jakie had written. This was the one who had got him his job on the stage. But this was no Jenny Levi—this was a real "shiksa." He looked around him a little over-

come. Chorus girls pattered about, their bare legs gleaming in the shadows of the wings. He stared, fascinated at all these strange sights—so fascinated that he was almost forgetting his message.

"Mr. Yudelson is an old friend of my family," Jack was explaining to Mary. "He's known me ever since I was a child. He's a great friend of my father's."

"Sure, sure," Yudelson nodded, catching the tail end of Jack's remarks. "Cantor Rabinowitz and me are such friends like we was born together."

At the words "Cantor Rabinowitz" Mary gave a little start of surprise. So—that explained a great deal. Now she understood what Jack had meant when he spoke of his family's aversion to the stage. He was the son of a Cantor. Jack looked at Mary confused. At first he didn't know quite what to say. He didn't know what Mary's reactions would be to this sudden acquisition of knowledge concerning his parentage. But his hesitation was only momentary. He drew himself up proudly.

"Yes," he said simply, "my father is the finest Cantor on the East Side."

There, it was out at last. Jack felt relieved. It was like getting rid of a long-aching tooth. Mary had always taken him for what he was—without question or query. He was a good ac-

tor with a fine voice, and she was in love with him—that was all that was necessary. Jack had always sensed this attitude in Mary, and what he had told her of his past had come from him voluntarily. But, having been raised in a good Hebrew family, he knew the storms that arose over the marriage of Jew with Gentile. He knew the prejudices, the dogmatisms of both races.

Furthermore he could realize, having learned much from his ten years of experience out in the world, that a girl raised as Mary obviously had been, might easily make social distinctions which would be detrimental to his cause. His father was a Jew and a Cantor, a learned man and, as such, respected and held in high esteem by the people of his race and his section of the city. But Jack had long ago found that very often an inability to speak the English language correctly meant more to some people than any amount of learning. His mother would probably not approve of Mary because she was a Gentile and of society and the theater, any more than Mary's mother would approve of him because he was a Jew and of the Ghetto.

"Did you never heard of Cantor Rabinowitz of the Orchard Street Synagogue?" Vaguely he could hear Yudelson's voice fraught with surprise at the very fact that anyone should never have heard of such a famous personage.

"He is a great Cantor," Yudelson was expounding on the virtues of his friend. "The best by any Synagogue. He sings just like he was talking to God. And the 'Kol Nidre'—you should hear him sing. Oi! A voice he has got."

"I should like to hear him sing very much, Mr. Yudelson," Mary said. "I'll come down to the Synagogue some time if I may. But I know you want to talk to Jack, so I'll run along. I'm so glad to have met you," she smiled and stretched out her hand to Yudelson.

"By me it's all right, too," Yudelson seized her slender fingers and shook them heartily.

As Mary moved away Jack took Yudelson by the arm and piloted him around and across the stage behind the backdrop.

"There's a little more room over here," Jack explained. "The girls exit on that side after this number. But how did you ever happen to come up here?" he continued after they had reached a more quiet spot.

"Well, Jakie, I come up to tell you to-morrow is the Day of Atonement—Yom Kippur—and we want you should sing 'Kol Nidre' by the temple to-night."

"Sing! In the Synagogue—to-night! But don't you know, Yudelson—why isn't my father singing to-night?" Jack's heart jumped. At first he had been thinking only of the ab-

A Warner Bros. Production. *The Jazz Singer.*

ON THE OPENING NIGHT, THE SHAMUS BRINGS BAD TIDINGS FROM HOME.

surdity of his singing in the Synagogue when his show was opening that same night. Then he suddenly realized that something must be wrong, otherwise Yudelson wouldn't have come for him. "What's the matter with my father," he repeated.

"So! Is what I come to tell you, Jakie. Your papa is sick. He can't sing."

"Say, how long has he been sick? What's the matter with him? Has he got a good doctor?" Jack questioned with a worried expression.

"Sure, the best doctor in New York—Dr. O'Shaughnessy from the Rockenfeller Institute. But he ain't no better. He has been sick since the day you was there," Yudelson told him. "And now to-night starts the Day of Atonement and this is the first time in your papa's life what he wouldn't be able to sing in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur. So we had a meeting from the committee who should sing in his place. So I ask your mama, and she thought it would please your papa if you sing to-night."

"But my God, Yudelson, he threw me out of the house only two weeks ago," Jack bitterly reviewed that scene in his mind.

"Oi, Jakie, don't be foolish. How much times was you threw out—one time?" Yudelson argued. "A son could be threw out twenty

times by the papa, and yet a son is a son. And it would make such a surprise for your papa if you sing to-night."

"Yudelson, I'm sorry, but I can't do it."

"Ach, now Jakie, such a time I had with the committee—you know how it is a committee—they wanted Levy, the Shamus, should sing. But I'm the chairman and they all owe me money, so when they voted it was the way your mama and me wanted. I told them 'Jakie, when he was a little boy and he sang in the choir, his papa learned him all the words of all the prayers, and what a little boy learns he never forgets.' And even if maybe a few words you should forget you can look in the prayer book. See, I got confidence in you, Jakie, and so has your mama."

"But don't you understand, Yudelson? Our show opens to-night. It's the chance I've dreamed of for years——"

"Sure, but Jakie, ain't I telling you your papa is sick, and you are his son. He learned you you should be a Cantor, and now you should come back to the Synagogue." To Yudelson there was only one answer to his plea. Nothing should stand between a son and his filial duty. Thousands of years of beliefs were in his attitude—beliefs which from time immemorial have held the desert tribes together and furthered their existence. And the belief was

inherent in Jakie, save that he armed himself against it with the armor of his ten years' training in the theater.

"Yudelson, the show business is different from every other kind of business," he tried to explain his attitude. "Even if there is a death in the family an actor plays his part—the show goes on. No one out front knows what's happening back here. The actor mustn't allow anyone to know. It's just like religion—like soldiers trained in an army——"

"Oh, Jack! Jack, I want to see you a minute," Jack could hear Lee calling him from across the stage during a lull in the music.

"I'm over here, Mr. Lee. Can you come here?" He saw the producer coming behind the drop. "Mr. Lee, listen a minute. I don't know how I'm going to explain this—but—excuse me—Mr. Lee, this is Mr. Yudelson, an old friend of my family. He's just come up to tell me that my father down on the East Side is very sick—and——"

"Your father—on the East Side?" Lee looked at Jack, questioningly, and surveyed Yudelson with a puzzled air.

"Yes, I know I held out on you, Mr. Lee—that other afternoon when I didn't want to talk about my people," Jack was talking against time, quickly, nervously. "But I had quarreled with my father—he's a Cantor in a Synagogue

—about going on the stage and I felt then I never wanted to go back there again—I wanted to live my own life in another way. But to-night is the eve of the Day of Atonement; Mr. Yudelson's come to tell me that my father is sick—my mother sent him to ask me to come down and sing in my father's place to-night. My father trained me to be a Cantor—until I ran away—and——"

"But my dear boy, you know as well as I do that's impossible!" Lee almost laughed aloud at the suggestion, so preposterous it seemed to him.

"Isn't there any way we could arrange it?"

"Only to-night and to-morrow until sundown," Yudelson added his plea to Jack's.

"Absolutely not," Lee returned emphatically, including both Jack and Yudelson in his answer. "I'm banking on one thing only in this show, and that's you, Jack. Let me tell you something. I've been an actor myself—O, yes, I've been through the mill, too. My mother died one afternoon, and I went on that night. Furthermore, Jack," he turned to the singer and spoke in low tones, "something happened just a little while ago that leaves me in a pretty tight position—more than you know. It means that I'm depending so much on you, now, that it isn't even funny. I've given you your chance—now give me mine. Tell him you can't

do it," he nodded toward Yudelson and turned away.

"Is that your boss?" Yudelson asked as Lee crossed the stage.

"Yes-s-s," Jack considered slowly. He was trying to think of some way to make Yudelson understand his position—some way of appealing to him. "Listen, Yudelson," he began, "do you know how much it costs to put on a show like this?" he waved his hand toward the stage. "Just as everything stands now this show has cost—well, somewhere around two hundred thousand dollars."

"Oi—oi, oi! Two hundred thousand dollars!" Yudelson looked amazed. "Is the true, Jakie?"

"Yes, the big musical shows all cost about that much—and sometimes more. You heard Mr. Lee say he was depending on me to put this over. Now, I ask you, you're a business man—can I walk out on Mr. Lee after he's staked all this money on—on—well, on me—and just because my mama wants me to sing one night in a synagogue—don't you understand, now, Yudelson?"

Yudelson shrugged his shoulders, but reason was beginning to dawn. "Yeh, Jakie, I suppose so. You can't sing to-night, so—so I'll have to tell your mama and listen to that voice from Levy's." He turned to go.

"Levy? That's the sexton, isn't it? Why, he's got a fine voice," Jack tried to lighten the blow.

"Yeh, like a nannygoat," Yudelson sneered. "Nu, what can I do. You're sure you can't come," he asked once more.

"If I could, I would. But you see how it is and try to explain to mama and the committee."

"All right, Jakie. So, good-by. Leshono Tovo Tikosamu," he held out his hand.

"Thank you, Yudelson," Jack shook hands, "and Happy New Year to you, too."

"See, you didn't forget, did you, Jakie?" the jeweler smiled, pleased at Jack's remembrance of the salutation.

"No, I didn't forget," Jack answered.

He watched his visitor out of sight and then sat down heavily on a chair in a corner. He sighed brokenly and his head drooped disconsolately. Was this right—this thing he had done, he questioned himself. To whom, did he owe allegiance? To his mother, his father, his race—or to this new demanding mistress, the theater? His father, sick—for the first time unable to sing in the synagogue. His father had called him to do his duty as a son and as a Cantor—and he had refused. He—the son of a Cantor—had refused to sing at Yom Kippur.

"The old boy gone?" Lee interrupted Jack's thoughts and brought him to with a start. "Did

you make him understand you couldn't go down there?"

"Yes, I told him—I explained," Jack scarcely noticed what he was saying.

"That's right! Now, come on, brace up. You've got to go on in a minute. You haven't time to get your make-up on now, but get it on during intermission. God, boy! Dress rehearsal's on—just this, and then the big opening to-night! Aren't you thrilled? Your name in all the papers to-morrow—your name all over Broadway——"

"And he won't be able to sing to-night—for the first time in his life he won't be able to sing in synagogue," Jack was murmuring to himself, scarcely heeding Lee's words.

"Here, here, Jack, snap out of it," Lee shook the boy by the shoulders. "You're all right, now. You're going to be the hit of the show." He pushed Jack not at all unkindly toward his entrance.

Jack shook himself and threw back his shoulders, but he was swallowing hard. "I'll do the best I can—to-night—Mr. Lee," he forced the words from his lips. "I only hope I won't disappoint you."

With a crash the music took up the ribald air of a jazz tune, and Jack stepped onto the stage.

CHAPTER XV

Born of Desperation

The still quiet of impending gloom hung over the home of Cantor Rabinowitz. People moved to and fro with uneasy, hushed steps; spoke in unnatural, lowered voices. The odor of medicines and antiseptics clung heavily to the air. Neighbors came and went on tiptoe, bringing little bowls and baskets covered with white cloths. The Cantor was desperately ill—so ill that Dr. O'Shaughnessy had ordered a hospital bed immediately, but at Mrs. Rabinowitz's insistent pleadings had compromised by sending white-clad nurses to look after the sick man. Mrs. Rabinowitz herself was worn and pale with nights of watching and interminable efforts to do something—anything, that might provide comfort for her husband.

Now she waited anxiously for the return of Yudelson and the news he would bring from the theater and her Jakie. The Cantor rested uneasily, under the supervision of the day nurse, and she could do but little. To her mind, however, there could be only one answer—Jakie would come and sing the "Kol Nidre." Jakie might have done many things, be many

things, but he was a good son and he would not fail in his duty to his parents and his religion. He might sing jazz in the theater, but when the call of the synagogue came, he would respond.

She opened the door in answer to Yudelson's knock, almost expecting to find Jack there with him. But as she saw the downcast mien and the somber look of the jeweler, she gasped.

"Mr. Yudelson—Mr. Yudelson, did you find Jakie? Is all right, no?" her voice rose in her eagerness and excitement.

"Yeh, I found Jakie," Yudelson answered sorrowfully, "but he says I should explain he can't come to-night."

"Oi, oi, oi, oi," Mrs. Yudelson moaned, sinking into a chair. "He can't come—Jakie can't come. Did you explain him his papa is sick?" She tried to gather her wits about her and understand this strange situation. For a brief moment she thought it possible that Jakie might not have understood.

"Sure, I explained him," Yudelson nodded, "but he says what he acts to-night in a show what costs two hundred thousand dollars, and his boss won't let him go."

"In the theayter—and his papa is maybe dying yet!" Mrs. Rabinowitz shook her head mournfully, utterly incapable of absorbing this entirely new and strange idea. "Maybe he

comes yet to-night when his boss shouldn't see him?" she suggested hopefully.

Yudelson shrugged his shoulders. "Nein, nein, Mrs. Rabinowitz," he despaired, "Jakie sings by the theayter to-night. He ain't coming to the synagogue."

The two sat and stared disconsolately at each other. Mrs. Rabinowitz was trying to turn the matter over in her dazed mind. She was certain that she must do something. If Jakie would only come she knew that the Cantor would rally to some extent. His illness was not purely physical—it was mental; it was the worry, the heartache, the blow that he had received when he found that his own son was singing jazz songs in the theater. If the Cantor could only once hear his boy's voice in the Synagogue! She attempted vainly to plan some solution—some way out. But she could only moan and wipe the tears from her already reddened eyes.

Yudelson felt that he had rather got himself into a precarious position. Hadn't he been the one to urge the committee to accept Jakie as Cantor for that evening? He had made many promises of Jakie's prowess as a singer in the synagogue. He had said that all he had to do was find Jakie and the boy would come willingly—gladly. And now all his plans had failed. He'd have to face the committee with

no singer for that night—and every moment ticking off the clock brought sundown and the services nearer. If Levy sang—Yudelson shuddered at the thought.

Mrs. Rabinowitz got up and moved slowly toward the Cantor's room. She didn't trust nurses to see that he had everything he wanted. She felt that the most she could do was to minister with her own hands. Yudelson still swayed back and forth in his chair, but his meditations were interrupted by a neighbor woman who came out of the kitchen, a broom in her hands. On seeing Yudelson there she immediately broke out into a stream of Yiddish, asking whether the Cantor was better. Yudelson tried to affect a facetious manner to hide his grief.

"Am I a doctor or a riddle guesser you should ask me such questions, Mrs. Rubin?" he replied in English. "I am worrying now who sings 'Kol Nidre' when Yom Kippur begins."

He turned as he heard the bedroom door open and jumped up anxiously as the nurse appeared, a medicine bottle and spoon in her hand.

"The Cantor, is he better?" Yudelson spoke anxiously.

"I'm afraid not," the nurse shook her head. "There seems to be very little change. I'm waiting for the doctor now." Her starched

skirts swished out into the kitchen, where she was quickly followed by Mrs. Rubin.

Yudelson returned to his chair, and rocked back and forth slowly. But once more he was interrupted. Clarence opened the door quietly and tiptoed into the room.

"Did you find Jakie?" he asked in a loud whisper. "Is he going to sing to-night?"

"Sure, I found him," Yudelson said apathetically. "But he ain't going to sing—he can't come. He sings by the theayter to-night."

"Well, I'm having trouble with the choir. I think you'd better come over and see about it," Clarence paced the room nervously.

"Loafers!" Yudelson ejaculated. "What's the matter now. The committee votes, don't they?"

"I know, but you promised that you'd bring Jakie down there, and the choir doesn't think he'll come. And if he doesn't they don't want to sing—they didn't like the idea in the first place and now they're all fighting among themselves."

"They don't want they should sing!" Yudelson rose quickly and pushed his hat down further on his head.

"Well, they say that if Jakie doesn't come Levy'll sing, and he doesn't know any of the Cantor's tunes, and even if he did his voice is not good enough, and that he'd be better off

singing alone than spoiling the services with a choir."

"Hum! Yeh, they're right," Yudelson agreed. "What can I do? The members are paying a special assessment five dollars for the Day of Atonement singing. If Levy sings they'll want we should give them the money back."

"Well, have you talked to my cousin, Avram Lipski?" Clarence suggested. "He just came from Russia last week and he's living down here."

Yudelson's face brightened at the thought. "Why didn't you speak from this before? Avram Lipski I know—at least a voice he's got. I should speak from him yet. Come on, Clarence, first we go by the synagogue and explain them lowlifers Levy shouldn't sing. Then we find your cousin."

He took the young man by the arm and hurried him off.

In the Cantor's room Mrs. Rabinowitz was busying herself about the bed, straightening the pillows and now and then smoothing the forehead of her husband. The Cantor lay pale and emaciated in a semi-stupor. Once in a while he opened his eyes and glanced vacuously about the room, but he closed them again soon, as though the effort were too much for his feeble strength. After a while he opened his eyes,

this time a little more brightly, and beckoned his wife to come closer to him. She sat down on the chair beside the bed and took his hand.

"Sara," he whispered weakly—so low that Mrs. Rabinowitz had to lean forward to catch his words. It's Yom Kippur to-night, ain't it?"

"Yeh, yeh, Yosele," Mrs. Rabinowitz patted his hand soothingly.

"I can't sing to-night, Sara," he looked up pathetically, "I can't sing to-night. For the first time in forty-five years I can't sing to-night in the Synagogue." He closed his eyes, exhausted by his exertion.

"Nu, nu, Yosele, you shouldn't think from such things. The doctor says you should just rest. And next Yom Kippur you should sing gooder as ever, Gott ut helfen," she soothed.

The Cantor shook his head feebly. "It makes for the first time in five generations a Rabinowitz does not sing on the Day of Atonement." A tear stole down his withered cheek, and Mrs. Rabinowitz wiped it away softly. He lay quiet for a few minutes. Nothing disturbed the silence save the ticking of the clock.

The Cantor slowly moved his hand until it rested upon that of his wife. "Sara," he mumbled, "I been dreaming Jakie come back to sing 'Kol Nidre.' Oi, such a dream." He paused "Maybe God would forgive him—if he comes to-night and sings."

The mention of Jakie's name made Mrs. Rabinowitz start nervously. Suddenly she had an idea. Suppose she, herself, should go to the theater and try to bring Jakie back. She looked down at the Cantor to see whether he were going back to sleep.

"Yeh, yeh, Yosele," she murmured. She waited for a few moments. Then she tried withdrawing her hand stealthily from his clasp. He stirred uneasily, but dropped back into his accustomed lethargy immediately. Once more she began pulling her hand away, this time with greater success. She wasn't quite certain how she could explain her absence in case the Cantor should wake again, and as she was debating on the possibilities of leaving the house, the bedroom door opened and Dr. O'Shaughnessy entered followed by the nurse.

"Well, well, Mrs. Rabinowitz," the gray haired, hearty looking Irishman rubbed his hands professionally. "And how's the patient to-day?" He began opening his bag and taking out a stethoscope. He turned to the nurse with some questions and the two examined the temperature chart that hung by the bedside. The doctor shook his head gravely.

Mrs. Rabinowitz got up and touched the doctor's arm hesitatingly. "Is he better, doctor?" she whispered.

Dr. O'Shaughnessy smiled. "We'll see, now

—we'll see. Suppose you just go out in the other room and sit down and rest a bit." He propelled her gently toward the door.

Meantime Yudelson was fighting his own battles in the synagogue. Seated at the head of a long table he was expounding his authority to a group of four of his coreligionists.

"But gentlemen, I think it should be me who should sing in the Cantor's place," Levy, a little, scrawny man with a sparse, scraggly beard, stood up, interrupting the flow of Yudelson's language.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Yudelson pounded with his fists on the table. "Levy, you sit down!" he ordered. "Ain't I the chairman? Ain't I got to speak!"

"But it's my right I should sing——"

"Schlemiel!" Yudelson yelled angrily. "Do you think the congregation paid for special five dollars for the Day of Atonement singing for you squawking like a tomcat yet?"

The din of five argumentative voices rose high on the air. Who would sing, then? Levy shouldn't sing! Where was there a Cantor to be got now?

"You should let me worry about that!" Yudelson made himself heard above the noise. "Ain't I the chairman, yet?"

They subsided.

"Our beloved Cantor is very sick next door,"

Yudelson continued, glaring at Levy, who shrank back into his chair, quelled for the moment. "He should hear you sing he dies sure." Yudelson rose and jammed his hat down on his head. "The meeting is over," he announced. "I do the worrying." He stalked out the door.

He returned to the Cantor's home in search of the latest news. Mrs. Rabinowitz was moving about nervously trying to find a coat, a shawl, anything to wear uptown. She didn't want to leave before the doctor, but she felt that she must go quickly if her errand were to do any good. She listened at the bedroom door, but she could hear nothing save a slight clink of bottles and the swish of the nurse's skirts. Furthermore, she didn't know what excuse she could make to the nurse for going out.

Yudelson came in at that moment with the old question on his lips.

"I don't know, Mr. Yudelson," Mrs. Rabinowitz answered him. "The doctor come. He's inside with the Cantor. He don't say nothing."

Yudelson nodded and sat down awaiting the advent of the doctor. Mrs. Rabinowitz felt uneasy. She questioned the advisability of saying anything about her proposed visit to Jakie for fear it would be discouraged. Yet she believed that if Jakie once saw his mama and heard how really serious was his papa's condition he would surely come.

"Mr. Yudelson," she finally whispered, "I think I go by the theayter and see Jakie—now."

"Nu-nu, Mrs. Rabinowitz, it won't do no good," Yudelson advised. "Ain't I told you Jakie sings by the theayter to-night. He couldn't come. I explain him about his papa—I tell him he should come—he can't come. Ain't it all that money——"

Yudelson was interrupted by the appearance of the doctor, who came out folding up his instruments and his case. Both Yudelson and Mrs. Rabinowitz jumped up eagerly.

"The Cantor!" they both exclaimed.

"Now, now, Mrs. Rabinowitz, you mustn't excite yourself," Dr. O'Shaughnessy laid a restraining hand on her arm. "The Cantor is not much better, I'm afraid. You'll have to keep him very quiet—don't allow anyone to see him. He must have absolute rest. I'm doing everything I can. If he sleeps—so much the better. Don't disturb him, whatever you do. I'll call in later this evening to see how he is. Good day." He picked up his hat and went out the door.

"Mr. Yudelson," Mrs. Rabinowitz turned on the jeweler hysterically. "I got to go find Jakie. I'm his mama. If I tell the Cantor Jakie sings to-night he gets all right. I got to go." Mrs. Rabinowitz searched frantically for her shawl.

"All right, all right," Yudelson agreed, "but I go with you. I know where is Jakie. Maybe he'll come for his mama."

The nurse appeared in the doorway. "Mr. Rabinowitz is sleeping," she told them quietly. "You're very tired," she went over and patted Mrs. Rabinowitz kindly. "Why don't you go out for just a little walk. You need some fresh air."

"Sure, sure, Mrs. Rabinowitz," Yudelson urged. "We go out for a little while."

Mrs. Rabinowitz threw her shawl over her head. "He is asleep," she mumbled. "Sure, I go out, now. You take care for him," she smiled up at the nurse.

"Yes, I'll take good care of him," the nurse promised.

Yudelson and Mrs. Rabinowitz started uptown.

CHAPTER XVI

The Greater Love

As the curtain came down for intermission Jack hurried to his dressing room to put on his make-up. He opened the door, glanced abstractly at himself in the mirror and set about mechanically preparing the necessary articles for his black-face rôle. He dropped off his top layer of clothes, revealing another suit beneath it. He loosened his collar, turned his shirt in at the throat, rolled up his sleeves and sat down before his mirror. Like an automaton he worked, smoothing on the layers of grease paint. Now and again he caught himself staring, vague and unseeing, at himself in the glass. A knock came at the door.

"Come in," he called, scarcely turning in his chair to see who his visitor might be. The mirror revealed the reflection of a fluttering, filmy pink, ostrich-tipped costume. A burst of music sounded loud and then died away as Mary opened and closed the door.

"Hello, Jack," Mary came over and stood like a bird poised for flight by the dressing table.

"Hello," Jack answered lethargically.

"Well?" Mary looked at the boy smiling. But no answering smile met her greeting.

"Well, what?" Jack propped his elbow on the table and leaned his head on his hand.

"Well, you haven't said anything about my costume. Isn't it lovely?" she pirouetted round gayly.

"Oh, yes—yes—it's awfully nice," Jack turned and dully surveyed the little dancing figure.

"Goodness gracious me!" she grimaced, "but aren't you high-hat."

"Oh, I'm sorry, Mary," Jack rose wearily and went to the wash basin to cleanse his hands of the paint, "but I've got ten million things on my mind. I—I just can't think straight."

"What's the matter, Jack?" Mary leaned against the wall where she could look at the singer as he made up. Her interest in her costume had completely deserted her. She realized now that there was something quite radically wrong and the best thing to do was talk the matter over and see what it was. The thought of Yudelson and his request to see Jack "in person" flashed across her mind. "Has it something to do with that man who was here just now?" she questioned.

"Well, yes, in a way," Jack returned to the dressing table and began smearing the black make-up over his face.

"What's the matter with him? What did he want?" Mary's questions might have sounded almost impertinent but she knew that the best thing to do was to draw Jack into some kind of conversation and allow him to confide his troubles.

"It wasn't him—he just brought me a message—a message from my father and mother."

"It's not right! It's not right, Jack!" Mary burst out. "Don't they know this is your opening night? You mustn't be disturbed this way. Oh, Jack, I just want to keep you away from everything—from everybody—until to-night is over. This is *your* night—the biggest night of your life!"

"Sure, I know, Mary—you're right, but—but—" Jack turned away sadly.

"But what, Jack? What *is* the matter? I don't mean to be inquisitive, but something terrible's bothering you. What is it, Jack?" Mary pleaded.

"It's what Yudelson—that man that was here—it's what he told me. Mary, he told me things that are making me hate myself," Jack faced about and gazed at Mary with the tragedy of despair written on his features.

"If you'll tell me about it perhaps I can help you," Mary suggested softly.

"I don't think so, Mary. No one can help me now but myself. You—you couldn't under-

stand my—my feelings about this. It's something that's inside me—born in me—O, I don't know. And I'm fighting it—fighting it, I tell you—God knows why! Yes, I know why!" Jack's voice sobbed out his mental agony. "But—I—I can't tell you," his voice dropped; his head bowed.

"Yes, I can understand those things, Jack," Mary was watching the boy intently, catching his mood, his feelings. "Tell me some more."

"No, I tell you, I can't," Jack spoke roughly. He wanted to talk, but there was something that restrained him—a vague fear of revealing his innermost sentiments to someone who might not understand. "If I told you, you'd hate me, too."

"No, Jack, I don't think so—I don't think there's anything that could make me hate you." She stood silent, contemplating the boy before her. Another thought came to her mind. She picked at the ostrich plumes on her dress absently. Finally she looked up shyly—a strange attitude for Mary who usually decided what she wanted and then went after it in a direct manner. "Jack," she asked gravely, "did you —when you said you loved me—did you mean it?"

"I sure did—you know that, Mary. I'm crazy about you," Jack was startled for a moment at the question.

"Well, I wasn't sure—exactly. I didn't know. But now that I do know—it makes a difference. You see, Jack, ever since you told me about your father I've been thinking about you. The son of a Cantor. I can't get you out of my mind."

"Maybe it's better that you *did* get me out of your mind," Jack spoke harshly and began viciously modeling a huge, red mouth around his lips. "Maybe it would be better if I got *you* out of *my* mind. Yudelson, and everything he said—well, it gave me a different slant on things. I can see things now I didn't see before. Oh, I knew they were there, all right, but they never bothered me. They seemed so far away. But suddenly they've become important. I understand them better."

"You mean—" Mary began.

"I mean the difference between you and me. Don't you see? Yudelson and me—Dillings and you—well, we're pretty far apart. You stand for certain things, and I stand for others. I saw it as soon as I talked to Yudelson. I knew it—but I didn't bother about it that day. Dillings—that day—he didn't want to talk to me. It wasn't all just because of you, Mary, he didn't speak—it was me! I didn't belong."

"But I'm not like he is. I'm not like Dillings," Mary defended herself.

"Maybe not, but you're not like me. Oh, I know," he held up his hand in a warning gesture as Mary started to speak. "I know what you think. I'm a rough diamond. You'll take hold of me and polish me, and make me like you. Well, you can't! I tell you, you can't! All my life I'm going to be just what I am. And you're going to be just what you are. You can't do it!" Jack buried his head in his arms and sighed brokenly.

There was a long pause. Neither spoke. Then Mary moved closer to the bowed figure. She touched his shoulder with the tips of her fingers.

"Then why did you say you loved me, Jack," she said slowly.

For a long time Jack made no answer. Finally he raised his head, and there were tears in his eyes. "Do you really want to know?" his voice came faintly.

"Yes," Mary nodded.

"All right then, I'll tell you," Jack straightened up, his muscles tense, his breath coming quickly. "I'll tell you. Because I couldn't help it. That's why."

"Well, then," Mary questioned.

"But love means marriage, to me," Jack continued, "and marriage means a home and kids. I—I'd like to have a kid like you—a little boy—but I'd want him to be like you," Jack's

voice softened, and his tension relaxed for the moment. "My God, I'm crazy about you."

"Jack," Mary moved closer, "would you—would you mind saying that again?"

"No! I won't say it again!" The old hardness came back. "I won't say it again. I've got no right to say it at all." He got up stiffly and went over to the wardrobe, talking over his shoulder. "When Yudelson came and told me——"

But he got no further. Mary ran and stood in front of him, blocking his way. "Jack," she said, "come here." She led him back to the chair and sat down beside him. "Now, listen, you've got to forget all this nonsense. We won't talk about it any more. Let's just talk about ourselves—about you and me." She took his hand tenderly.

"I can't forget, Mary. I can't forget what Yudelson said," Jack moaned. "He told me my father is sick. To-night is the eve of the Day of Atonement. You can't understand what that means, Mary, to my people. It's the most solemn, the most holy day of the Jewish year. It's the great day of every Cantor's life—it's the day when he becomes the mouthpiece of the congregation. He talks to God—he talks to God not for himself, but for all those people come to worship in the synagogue. He asks for atonement for them. It is he—he who

brings to God the burden of their sins. Can you understand?"

"Yes, Jack, I know," Mary nodded.

"My father is a Cantor. For five generations the Rabinowitzes have been Cantors. For five generations they have called to God for the people of their synagogue. The name Rabinowitz is like a trade-mark on Orchard Street. All these years my father has sung for his people. And all those years before him his father and his father's father—they all sang for their people. Now, my father is sick. For the first time in five generations no Rabinowitz will sing the 'Kol Nidre' on the eve of the Day of Atonement. My mother sent Yudelson to ask me to come and sing in my father's place. There is no other Rabinowitz to sing. . . ."

"And what did you tell Mr. Yudelson, Jack?"

"What could I tell him," Jack shrugged his shoulders hopelessly; he stared at the floor. "To-night's our opening. Just as I step out on the stage to-night to do a black-face jazz song the most important part of the services will be starting."

"And so——"

"So I had to tell him: 'No.' I had to send my mother word that not for father or mother, religion or race, would I miss this opening."

"I'm glad you said that."

"Glad! How can you say that?"

"Oh, don't you see, dear, there's only one thing you must think of, and that's your work. It's the most important thing you have."

"I've tried hard to feel that way, Mary—don't think I haven't. Listen, this is something I never told anybody before," Jack began his confession hesitatingly. "Sometimes, when I'm alone—and I'm alone an awful lot, more than you think—the old songs from the Synagogue begin wailing in my ears. I—I can't get away from them. Honest, I can hear them sounding as they used to sound when I was a little boy down on Orchard Street—and they run around through my head until I'm almost crazy—over and over again. And then sometimes I—I cry, and sometimes I—I, do you understand, Mary?"

"Yes," she nodded.

"You know back there on the road in those hall bedrooms," Jack shuddered, "I used to get down on my knees and talk to God in Hebrew. I—I bawled him out—because he made me only half a Cantor—half a Cantor and half a bum. Oh, don't you see, dear, don't you see? If I was all bum, I wouldn't care—what does a bum care, anyhow. But I'm not. I'm part a Cantor. But if I was all Cantor, I would be happy."

"Do you think so?" Mary's query was directed not as a question but as a doubtful specu-

lation concerning the truth of Jack's remark.

"Yes, I think I would," Jack answered, half defiantly.

"Well, why didn't you go with Yudelson, then?" Mary was leading up to her arguments with all the wariness of a Philadelphia lawyer.

"Why?" Jack stared at the girl beside him. "You know why! It's Broadway! It gets in your blood—gets under your skin. God! I get a thrill just walking up and down the street at night. The lights—all the people—the movement—the white, glittering brightness of it—the names up over the theaters—the crowds—and knowing I'm a part of it—I belong—I'm here! Honest, sometimes I just stand still and stare, and feel the mobs pushing past me. It's—it's sort of America, to me. I love it! I can't explain—but——"

"You don't have to, Jack," Mary nodded sympathetically, "I know what you mean. I feel it, too—that same way. I can realize what you're going through."

"Yes, maybe about the theater—and Broadway. But not that other side of my life—the East Side—my father and mother. Why, my father is sick now, because of me."

"That's silly," Mary turned quietly, trying to divert the boy's mind from this channel.

"No—no, it's not," he returned vehemently. "Only two weeks ago he told me he never

wanted to see me again. He's been sick ever since then. Sick—because he's eating his heart out on account of me—and what I'm doing."

"Then what are you going to do about it? Go down on the East Side and be a Cantor the rest of your life?" There was no bitterness, no scorn, in Mary's questions; only a tenderness and sympathy that struck an answering chord in Jack's heart.

"No-o-o," he hesitated, turning the matter over and over in his mind. It was true, he felt, that in one sense he could never return to the Ghetto and be happy. All his life the call of Broadway would be ringing in his ears and the white, bright lights would be blinding his eyes. Just as during those years on the road the chants and prayers of the synagogue kept calling him. If only he could be just one thing or the other. But he felt that he was neither. He was only a part of each.

"Do you care about your career on the stage?" Mary asked very gently after a while.

"It's the only thing in the world I do care about," Jack burst out passionately.

"The only thing?"

"Yes, the only thing."

"Even more than me, Jack?" Mary weighed her words carefully.

"More than you," Jack nodded slowly.

"Jack! Oh, my dear, my dear! That's what

I've been trying to find out. Now can't you understand?" Mary's words came tumbling out swiftly; she had gained her point. "Don't you see, Jack, I don't want you selfishly. I love you, Jack—I love you—but I love you so much that I want you to do—to be—exactly what you want. Nothing must stand in your way! If the thing you feel is this—the stage—the theater—then you must stay here. Nothing must keep you from it—not your parents—not me—not anything. Any love that demands is selfish. You mustn't allow that kind of love to stand in your way. Don't you understand, Jack—don't you?"

She was standing before Jack, now, her arms outstretched, pleading; the tears glistening in her blue eyes. Jack rose to his feet unsteadily; he caught the girl in his arms.

"Mary," he whispered, "Mary, darling! Gee, you're a little bit of all right."

A knock sounded on the door. Jack released the girl and called: "Come in."

Gene thrust his head into the room. "Time for your number, Mr. Robin," he announced.

"I'm ready. I'll be right out." Jack hastily added a few touches of make-up to his face. The sound of ragtime music floated into the dressing room.

"All right, Mr. Robin." Gene closed the door.

"Hear that music! That's that new Charleston." Jack turned from his mirror, humming, and began pulling on his white cotton gloves. "That's a steal from something. It's a good tune. You know, Mary," he took a final look at himself in the mirror, "if people knew what a cinch it was to black up like this they'd all be doing it. I feel like that bird—what's his name? You know, the one that sticks its head in the sand and thinks it's hidden?"

"Oh, the ostrich," Mary laughed.

"Yeh, that's it. Well, I feel just like that in this make-up. It would be a good job—only I have to buy so much soap."

A second knock at the door. This time Jimmy, the doorman, entered.

"Say, Mr. Robin, there's a man out there wants to see you—the same one that was here before to-day," Jimmy announced.

"It's Yudelson," Jack's face fell; the brightness left his smile. "Tell him he'll have to wait until after this number, Jimmy."

"There's a lady with him, Mr. Robin," Jimmy added.

"A lady? Who?"

"I'll leave, Jack," Mary started toward the door. Jack caught her arm.

"No, please, Mary, stay here. I'll see who it is." He turned to follow Jimmy, and as he reached the doorway he came face to face with his mother.

A Warner Bros. Production. *The Jazz Singer.*

JACK HEARS THAT THE DYING CANTOR WANTS HIM.

CHAPTER XVII

Anguished Hours

Jack stared at his mother in amazement. Almost exhausted by the trip to which she was unaccustomed; emotionally overwrought, Mrs. Rabinowitz stood trembling before this strange person whom she could scarcely recognize beneath the heavy black make-up. She peered up at her son in astonishment and almost fear. But now Jack was holding out his arms to her.

"Mama!" he cried, clasping her hands, and leaning forward to kiss her. But he remembered his make-up and stepped back, pulling her into the dressing room with him.

"Jakie! This ain't you!" Mrs. Rabinowitz was holding the boy at arms' length and inspecting him in a puzzled manner.

Yudelson, in his turn, was almost as bewildered as Mrs. Rabinowitz. He stared at Jack uncertainly, and shook his head.

"It talks like Jakie, but it looks like a nigger!" he exclaimed finally.

"Yudelson, didn't you explain to my mama?" Jack turned to the jeweler, his face drawn in an agony of despair.

"Sure, I told her everything, the same way

you told me, Jakie, but she made me I should bring her here," Yudelson looked a little timorously at Jack, uncertain as to whether he had done the right thing. But Mrs. Rabinowitz was waving his words aside.

"Jakie, I got to tell you from your papa," she spoke in low, monotonous tones that sounded almost like a wailing chant. "Jakie, your papa is sick. He is laying in bed. His face is so white—" she was swaying, almost falling. Jack caught her arm.

"Please, Mama," he pulled a chair nearer and gently pushed her into it. "Sit down, Mama, sit down." He placed a chair opposite her and sank into it, his breath coming fast and hard. He had completely forgotten Mary, who moved unobtrusively to a corner in the room where she could watch Jack's face.

"Your papa is sick, Jakie. All the time he is talking about you," Mrs. Rabinowitz continued in the same monotones, scarcely seeing the boy with the black face and the ungainly red mouth who sat in front of her. "His eyes is open like a baby's eyes. His face is white like a yahrzeit candle. All the time he talks from his son. He was saying this day, 'Sara,' he said—his voice was so low I could hardly hear him—he said, 'maybe Jakie will come tonight and sing in the synagogue.' "

"Did he really say that, Mama?" Jack leaned

forward, strangely touched by his mother's message. His father wanted him to come back —to come back and sing in the Synagogue. He had forgiven him, perhaps; had forgotten the grudge he bore against his son.

"He said it—the way I'm setting here this minute, he said it," Mrs. Rabinowitz repeated dully in the same sing-sing tones. "For five generations God always heard a Rabinowitz sing every Day of Atonement, every holy day, every Sabbath. God is used to it now." She looked up sorrowfully, her eyes pleading pathetically. "Jakie, your papa is dying, maybe. God will ask him, 'Is Jakie singing in the Synagogue to-night?' How can he say, 'No, he is singing in the theayter'!" She paused staring straight ahead.

A slight moan escaped Jack's lips. He shook his head miserably while Mary, from her corner, was viewing with consternation the effect of this visit on Jack. She couldn't help but feel sorry for the dejected woman who sat there so mournfully, her shawled shoulders sagging, her worn face so pitiful in her adversity. And yet—this was Jack's night of nights; the night that might make or mar the remainder of his theatrical career, and even his life. She turned away, sick at heart.

"You should come and sing, Jakie," Yudelson was urging from his place by the dressing

table. "If you don't there is only Levy, the shamus, to sing—with a voice like a frog," he added in disgust.

"Oh, my son, mein zin, my heart is breaking in pieces," Mrs. Rabinowitz rocked back and forth swaying, speaking like some uncanny automaton. "You got two hours before the sun goes out of the sky and it gets dark. Come with me home, Jakie."

"Mama, I can't! I can't do it!" Jack cried. "Can't you understand, Mama? This is my big chance to-night—the chance of my whole life. I've worked years for this. I want to make good. They're all banking on me. Mr. Lee—everybody—they've given me this one chance to make good. I've got to go on. If I come home now, Mama, don't you see it will be the end of everything for me? I can't give it up now. Please don't ask me to, Mama!"

But it was like addressing a plea to some unseeing, unbending goddess. Mrs. Rabinowitz scarcely heard the boy's words; she did not even understand what he meant. So much had happened—so many things to worry over—such great sorrow had been hers during the past two weeks that it had left her cold and numb. She knew only one thing—felt only one thing. Jakie *must* come home and sing in the synagogue that night for the sake of his father. She had to make him come, somehow. It didn't

matter how, so long as he returned. She must not go back alone.

"You can't come?" Her voice was strained and coldly intense in its repetitional rhythm. "You can't come? How can you say this to me, your mama? When you was a little boy, we was so poor. I worked so hard all the time for you. I slaved my fingers to the bone that there should be money to buy you nice things. My fingers, they used to bleed. Look at my hands, Jakie; it is still there the marks." She held out her rough, work-worn hands, exposing the knotted joints and the knobby fingers with the little black cuts interwoven like network around the broken nails.

Jack bent over swiftly and took the hands with the blue veins standing out on them like bas-relief. He patted them tenderly. "I know, Mama, I know," he whispered hoarsely, the tears starting to his eyes.

A knock sounded at the door. Gene thrust his head into the room. "Your specialty'll be on in a minute, Mr. Robin," he announced, looking curiously over the little gathering that seemed to create an air of tense drama in that tiny room.

"All right, Gene," Jack rose wearily, his mother's hands still in his. "Mama," he turned to the figure on the chair, "I haven't time to tell you—I've got to go on. But you

must try to understand, Mama. I'll explain it to you—just a little while. Yudelson—Mary," he turned for the first time since his mother's entrance to the girl. "Mary, tell my mother——"

"Wait, Jack, I'll go out and see if I can't get them to hold it for you for a few minutes," she flashed through the room like a flaming meteor, so bright and sparkling she seemed in the dull drabness that had fallen on the room. She patted Jack's arm and smiled up at him, the briefest sort of smile, as she sped out the door and into the wings.

"And Jakie, more your papa said," Mrs. Rabinowitz continued in that same uncanny voice that sounded so strange and unnatural. "Your papa said, 'Ask Jakie he should forgive me. He is doing things from sin, but he don't mean it. In his heart he is a Rabinowitz.' Jakie, the way I'm setting here this minute, before God I swear it—that is what he said." She rose to her feet. Even the oath did not unsettle this supernatural calm that had settled like a cloud over the woman who must have her son back at any cost.

"I know, Mama! I believe you!" Jack's voice was near to breaking. "I believe you."

"We're waiting for you, Mr. Robin," Gene appeared in the doorway, his temper slightly ruffled. "We can't hold it any longer."

"Yes, yes, I'm coming—right away, Gene," Jack called frantically. He caught hold of his mother's hand to make his one last plea. "Mama, if you only knew how the manager is depending on me—if you only knew how much this means to me—" he could hear the opening strains of his number floating back stage. The ragged, rhythmic air of the jazz tune rang in his ears. "They're going to make me a star, Mama," he was frantic now, his words tumbling out haphazardly. "They're going to put my name up in electric light—in electric lights on Broadway. I'll be rich, Mama, and famous —you can have everything you want—I've got to go on—they're depending on me——"

"There's your introduction, Mr. Robin," Gene turned away testily. It was no joke, dress rehearsal, and everyone should be watching his cue, ready to go on. It was enough to drive anyone mad. He paced up and down the narrow hall.

"Yes, yes," Jack had answered him. But now he was on his knees before his mother, whirling in the maelstrom of his own frenzy. "Mama, there's my introduction—they're playing for me now—Mama, I got to go on—I'll be right back, only fifteen minutes—wait for me, Mama. I haven't got time to tell you now—but I'll be right back—wait for me——"

"Mr. Robin, I'm going to get the blame for

this. They've vamped that——" Gene's words were cut short.

"I'm coming, Gene, I'm coming." He started for the door. "Yudelson! Please talk to my Mama; try to explain to her."

Gene was hurrying the reluctant star down the corridor toward his entrance.

"Mama! Yudelson! Wait—please," he was calling back. "Don't go. Wait." He caught sight of Mary. "Mary!" he called, pointing toward his dressing room. "Talk to my Mama—get her to wait until I come off." He shot out onto the stage, fell into his negro shamble, caught the lilt of the tune, smiled.

Mary went back to Jack's dressing room. "Wouldn't you like to come out where you can see your son, Mrs. Rabinowitz?" she asked gently.

The old lady gazed apathetically on the girl before her. She shook her head vaguely. Mary pulled the chair closer and helped Mrs. Rabinowitz into it. She looked at Yudelson and then at Jack's mother, but neither of them spoke. Through the open doorway came the sound of Jack's voice running off the preliminary patter of his song. Mary, knowing the words almost by heart, could follow in her mind's eye his every movement on the stage. But Mrs. Rabinowitz could hear nothing. She couldn't think. The events of the past two

weeks had piled mountain high, until her brain was insensible to impression.

Chorus girls ran up and down the hallway getting into place to go on when their cue came in Jack's number. Some of them stopped and glanced curiously at the strange woman with the wig, huddled down in her chair, almost lost in the folds of her heavy shawl. They nudged each other and speculated as to the queer duo in the star's dressing room and wondered what significance it had, then pushed each other along and jostled into position marking time to the music.

But Mrs. Rabinowitz saw none of this. The bare legs, the scantily clothed bodies that flashed by left no imprint on her mind. Before her eyes floated visions of the Cantor's pale, white face tossing on the pillow; his emaciated hands reaching out for her comforting reassurance. Then like some bad dream came the vision of Jack in his black make-up. That great, pink mouth almost seemed to leer at her. She shuddered. That couldn't be Jack's face. She drew back, looking about her, frightened.

From the stage came Jack's voice, welling high above the throbbing syncopation of the orchestra. Now he was down on one knee, flinging his arms out—reaching toward the very hearts of his audience. Swaying from side to side, clasping and unclasping his hands, rolling

his eyes. The gibberish of the words assumed a meaning; flowed fiercely and strongly into real sentiment; took on a startling, dramatic intensity. The jagged measures became pulsating melodies moving in undulating currents of tones.

Into the chorus went the singer. Once more the cry in the voice; the breaking, passionate throb of the plaintive outpouring of the soul. It held all the elements of religious fanaticism; a ritual supplication of the atavistic bushman to his gods; a majestic litany cheapened yet made poignant by the tinseled trappings of Broadway.

As Yudelson heard the voice he raised his head startled. He drew nearer the door to listen.

"That's Jakie!" he exclaimed in amazement.

But Mrs. Rabinowitz only swayed back and forth, unconsciously moving in time to the music. Mary nodded her head in confirmation. She, too, was listening intently, tapping her foot to the beat of the rhythm. She had never heard Jack sing as he was singing now. His voice had an even finer quality than before, a greater pathos, more expression. He seemed to be dramatizing every word. If he could only do it that well this evening, Mary thought. Mary wanted to share this feeling of the exultation with the other people in the room, but she

could find no heart to rejoice, knowing the silent suffering of the woman beside her.

"And—I—want—you—all—to—know . . .
I—want—to—go . . .
Back—to—my—mammy. . . ."

Jack was beating out the patter of the song, tapping his foot to the uneven throb of the rhythm.

"I'm through wanderin'—up—and—down . . .
I'm—goin'—to—strike—that—ol'—home town . . .
Where—the—folks'll—gather—roun' . . .
An' greet me. . . ."

Jack's voice lilted, rose and fell. He was talking now. Sharp and staccato the words cut the air.

"I—want—to—go . . .
Back—to—my—mammy. . . ."

Mrs. Rabinowitz could endure no more. Unsteadily she rose from her chair and blindly rushed toward the door. Mary caught her by the arm and Yudelson hurried forward to support her.

"We ain't goin' yet, Mrs. Rabinowitz," Yudelson tried to pull her back.

"That ain't my Jakie. That ain't my boy," she cried brokenly. "I'm going home."

"But Mrs. Rabinowitz, your son wants you to wait until he finishes singing," Mary began.

"No—no, no! I'm going home." She tried to push aside her two aides.

"I guess we better go," Yudelson nodded to Mary. "You tell Jakie."

Mary nodded. Yudelson and Mrs. Rabinowitz, struggling and stumbling over the coils of wire and rope, made their way to the stage door, their figures threw elongated, fantastic shadows against the lights back stage. They could barely hear the last lines of Jack's song.

"I've had my fling,
And it don't mean a thing—
It don't mean a thing—
My God—it don't mean——"

His voice broke in a sudden wave of heart-wracking agony. He choked. But his mother could no longer hear the sound of his song. It was swallowed up in the sunlight of the afternoon and the noises of the street.

Finished, he ran off the stage and burst into the dressing room. He looked around wildly. There was no one there. He turned about helplessly, bewildered. A little group of people surged forward—Carter, Mary, Lee, Gene—all

pulling at him, shaking his hand, thumping him on the back.

"Marvelous! Simply great"—"You certainly can put over a song, Jack."—"Congratulations, Mr. Robin, you were wonderful!"—"Say, you won't need any press agent after to-night!"

A medley of sounds. Jack stared, unhearing, unseeing. "Get out for the next number!" Lee was pushing the crowd back, scattering them right and left. "That was wonderful, Jack," he turned for a moment to the singer. "Say, you actually cried. Do it that way to-night and you'll be a knock-out sure!" He hurried out of the door. "All right, Gene. Ready for the next number," he called.

Jack moved slowly toward a chair and sank into it. He wiped his white gloved hand across his eyes, leaving a streak of light flesh showing grotesquely across the black. He rested his elbows on his knees. His head sank; he buried his face in his cotton gloves.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Call of His People

Mrs. Rabinowitz pushed open the door of the apartment and came slowly into the room, followed by Yudelson. Automatically she removed her shawl, folded it and put it away. Her legs barely supported her, but she started wearily toward the Cantor's room. The nurse appeared and held her finger to her lips.

"Sh-h-h!" she cautioned. "The Cantor's asleep. You mustn't go in now. Why, you look terribly pale, Mrs. Rabinowitz." She took the older woman's arm and helped her to a chair. "There, now, sit down for a little while. The doctor left some medicine for you. I'll get it."

"No, I don't want none," Mrs. Rabinowitz obediently sat down, but she shook her head at the word medicine.

The nurse, however, was already stirring up a powder in a glass of water. She brought it over to her patient. "Now, suppose you drink this," she held out the glass smiling. "It'll make you feel a lot better."

"He wouldn't come home," Mrs. Rabinowitz shook her head. "My Jakie wouldn't come home——"

"Now, now, he'll be home later," the nurse was simply trying to soothe her charge without knowing what she was talking about.

"No—no, he ain't coming, I tell you. He ain't coming."

The nurse looked at Yudelson perplexed. Yudelson nodded his head and came over beside the nurse.

"It's her son, Jakie. He sings in a theayter. He ain't coming home to sing in the Synagogue to-night," he explained.

"O," the nurse responded, "I see. Now, Mrs. Rabinowitz. Please drink this. And then the doctor says you must lie down for a little while. After that you must have something to eat. You know you promised the Cantor you'd attend the services, and you must have something nourishing if you're going to fast to-night and to-morrow." She held the glass to her patient's lips.

"Yes, drink, drink," Yudelson urged.

Obediently Mrs. Rabinowitz swallowed the liquid.

"Tell me the true, nurse. The Cantor, is he dying?" Mrs. Rabinowitz caught the nurse's hand and waited piteously for her answer.

"The doctor said," the nurse paused for a moment, "the doctor said that if we keep him very quiet he may pull through. Now suppose you let me help you to your room," she lifted

the older woman gently from her chair. "You can have a little sleep, too, and then when the Cantor wakes up, I'll call you."

Mrs. Rabinowitz nodded drowsily, the opiate already beginning its work on her weakened system. She allowed herself to be led to her room and made comfortable on the bed.

Yudelson sat down and wrapped himself in thought. Once more he was faced with the proposition of getting someone to sing the "Kol Nidre." A worried frown appeared on his brow. Lipski, Clarence's cousin, was his last resort. He might as well walk over and talk to him, as there seemed no other prospect in view. He felt that he'd almost sing himself before he'd allow Levy to sing. As his thoughts turned to the "shamus" that gentleman knocked, opened the door and walked in.

"So! Mr. Yudelson! You're just the man I was wanting to see," he began, rubbing his hands.

"Nu, Mr. Levy, what could I do for *you?*" Yudelson queried coldly, knowing well what was on his visitor's mind.

"I want I should get from you official the order I should sing to-night," Levy was enjoying his present position quite thoroughly.

"Oh, no, I couldn't give you yet," Yudelson returned determinedly.

"If you couldn't give me, who could?"

"*I* could give you, but I couldn't give you yet," Yudelson was stalling for time, now.

"What kind answer is this? It's nearly dark and you couldn't give me official the appointment yet. You ain't got nobody else," Levy spoke knowingly.

"I ain't saying I have oder I haven't," Yudelson returned dogmatically. "I told you I couldn't give you yet. In half an hour I'll know."

"In half an hour it will be too late. I got to practice a little bit in advance with the choir, ain't I?"

"In half an hour it'll be too late? For thirty years you waited the Cantor should get sick, you can wait another half hour!"

"Brother Yudelson, you are the chairman from the Executive Committee, no."

"Brother Levy, I am the chairman from the Executive Committee. Make yourself a *tsimmes* from it."

"All right! Then you are the chairman from the Executive Committee. So I want I should ask you, who is the shamus of the Orchard Street Synagogue? *Am* I the shamus oder *ain't* I the shamus?"

"Brother Levy—" Yudelson's remark was cut short. The two men stopped and stared, open-mouthed, at the door. There, his hand on the knob, stood Jack. He closed the door

quietly and entered the room. His face was drawn and pale, but there was an air of determination about him. "Jakie!" Yudelson found his voice at last. "You come to sing!" He turned a belligerent eye on Levy.

"Yes, get me a praying shawl and see if you can find a plush skull cap like the Cantor's, only a little smaller."

"A praying shawl and a skull cap! Jakie is going to sing!" Yudelson was reveling in his escape from his worries and his victory over the *shamus*. "Levy, get a praying shawl and a skull cap, quick!"

"Where could I find—" Levy began bitterly.

"*Are* you the shamus oder *ain't* you the shamus? For a shamus it ain't hard to find plenty shawls," he turned sarcastically on Levy.

"All right—all right," Levy moved scornfully toward the door. "He's going to sing! A kid from Broadway! What does he know from School? The committee is making a big mistake—" he retreated, muttering imprecations to himself.

"Jakie, I'm glad you come. I'll tell your mama," he knocked on the door of Mrs. Rabinowitz's room. "Mrs. Rabinowitz! Mrs. Rabinowitz!" he called. "Jakie is here! He's going to sing!"

Jakie was already turning to his father's

door when the nurse appeared, disturbed by the sound of voices.

"I'm Jakie," he announced. "I want to see my father."

"I'm afraid you'd better not," the nurse looked doubtful. "The doctor said that he shouldn't be disturbed."

"I'll be very quiet—I just want to look at him," Jack pleaded.

But Mrs. Rabinowitz was already halfway across the room, her eyes blinded with tears. "Jakie! Jakie!" she cried, clasping her son about the neck. "I knew you was coming, Jakie, I felt it in my heart! I knew you was coming! Oh, my Jakie, my darling! I knew you was coming!" The tears fell fast for the first time in many days. Her overburdened heart was finding the best balm it could have.

"Mama! Mama! I had to come," Jack put his arms about his mother. "I couldn't stand it. I want to see Papa."

"Yeh, yeh! Please let him see his papa," Mrs. Rabinowitz was urging hysterically, half laughing, half crying. "Let him see his papa. His papa will be better right away. Oi, Jakie, so glad I am you come. And the papa!" She was pushing the boy toward his father's room.

"I don't like to go against the doctor's orders," the nurse was explaining to Jack.

"But if you'll promise to be very quiet and not to wake him——"

"Yes, yes," Jack promised eagerly. "I'll just go in and look at him." He followed the nurse into the room.

"You'd better wait out here," the nurse returned and spoke to Mrs. Rabinowitz. "Too many people will disturb him." She closed the door softly.

Jack tiptoed over to his father's bedside. He looked down at the lean, white face, traced by multitudinous wrinkles where the once full contours had now fallen and shrunk. The prominent cheek bones seemed almost ready to break through the flesh. A dull, unnatural flush burned in two little bright spots below the sunken eyes. The skin stretched taut over the high bridge of the nose. The coverlet rose and fell spasmodically with the uneven breathings of the sick man.

Silently Jack dropped to his knees beside the bed. Great, wet tears fell unheeded on the counterpane. He put out his hand, groping for his father, and then fearing that he might wake him against the nurse's warning, slowly withdrew his hand. His suppressed sobs shook the couch slightly. The Cantor's eyelids fluttered for a moment. Then he opened his eyes slowly and with great effort. There, beside him, he saw the bowed head of his son.

To his dull, enfeebled mind it did not seem unnatural to see the boy kneeling there beside the bed. All day he had been dreaming that Jakie had returned. He was so weak that he was unable to distinguish between dreams and reality. And it didn't seem to matter. He made no attempt to segregate illusion from material truth. There was his son, awaiting his father's benediction before he went to sing in the Synagogue. The faintest flicker of a smile lighted up his wan face. With an effort he moved his hand over until it rested on Jakie's head. He closed his eyes.

Jack reached up and caught his father's hand gently and drew it to his lips. He remained motionless, clasping the thin fingers to his breast. His sobs died away slowly. A slight noise behind him caused him to turn. He saw the figure of the nurse in the doorway beckoning him. He got up slowly, replacing the Cantor's hand ever so lightly on its accustomed spot by his side. Once more he regarded the immobile form on the bed. With a deep sigh he tiptoed out the door.

"He's—still asleep," Jack spoke to his mother and Yudelson in a low tone of voice. He went over and sat down on the couch beside his mother.

"Oh, Jakie, he'll be better now—you see," she patted her son's hand. Suddenly she looked

up, a new fear gripping her heart. "Jakie! You *are* going to sing, ain't you?"

"Yes, Mama, yes, yes," Jack assured her.

"Oi, oi, oi," she sighed happily. "Such a long time you was coming. Nurse, you should tell the Cantor when he wakes up Jakie is here. Tell him Jakie is going to sing in Synagogue. Couldn't I please tell him now?" she rose eagerly.

"No!" The nurse barred her way. "We mustn't disturb him any more. I'll tell him everything when he wakes up. It'll do him a lot of good just to hear about it."

"But you remember to tell him everything," Mrs. Rabinowitz cautioned. "You tell him Jakie came right away as soon he heard. Tell him Jakie looks beautiful!" The nurse nodded her head, smiling sympathetically at the pathetic, eager figure so roused by this good fortune. "Tell him Jakie is standing on pins and needles, so anxious he is to practice with the choir," Mrs. Rabinowitz moved about excitedly. "Tell him Jakie ain't even *thinking* from no theayter."

"Yes, yes, I'll tell him everything," the nurse assured her.

"Mama, have you had anything to eat?" Jack looked anxiously at his mother's careworn face.

"No, she hasn't eaten a thing," the nurse in-

formed him. "She'd better have something now."

"Sure, I'll eat," Mrs. Rabinowitz began bustling about with quick, hurried steps. "And you, too, Jakie. I make ready such a lot to eat before fasting." She started toward the kitchen.

"I don't want anything, Mama," Jack shook his head.

"Never mind, I make you anyway a glass of tea," she was already hurrying into the kitchen, her eyes shining.

"Eat a little something with her," the nurse turned to Jack kindly. "It'll encourage her to eat, and she's scarcely touched a mouthful for days." She returned to her patient in the next room and closed the door.

"See, already she is a new person yet," Yudelson exclaimed to Jack, following the figure of Mrs. Rabinowitz as she scurried happily about the kitchen.

Jack nodded. "Yes, I know." He leaned wearily on his elbows, chin in hands. "Yudelson," he looked up finally, "don't say anything to Mama—but I left the theater without even seeing my boss. Just as soon as the dress rehearsal was over I got hold of the stage manager and told him I wasn't going to show up to-night. I beat it before I saw anybody. Well—you were there. You heard what my

boss said about my leaving. You know what I told you about the show." He sighed drearily.

"Sure," Yudelson agreed, impressed by Jack's confidence in him and the fact that he had given up an opportunity which entailed so much money. "It's a lot of money, Jakie, and you're throwing it away for your papa!"

"Oh, it isn't the money, Yudelson," Jack said sadly. "It's the idea that Mr. Lee believed in me—he staked everything on me, reputation and everything, and I—I left him flat. It wasn't fair. It wasn't playing the game. That's the thing that hurts me. God! I'd give anything to justify Lee's belief in me, and now —now—" he got up and walked wearily about the room.

"Never mind, Jakie, never mind," Yudelson tried to console the boy. "You shouldn't worry from bosses. A papa is hard to find—but bosses, there's plenty."

"Not for me—now. I'm finished." Jack sat down abruptly and morosely considered the situation. "I can't go back—now. I couldn't face Lee after—after playing him this dirty trick. He'll be through with me, all right. The night of the opening! And I walk out and leave him flat. He and Mary—staking everything on me. It makes me feel like a rat. I'll never go back."

Jack looked around the room as though it

were a new and strange place to him. Somehow the entire atmosphere seemed changed. He might as well get used to it, he reflected bitterly. Here he would live—and, probably, die. Singing the songs of his fathers in the synagogue next door. Wearing a skull cap and a prayer shawl. Spending the rest of his life, as his father had before him, on the East Side.

How many times would the call of the theater come to him! When he passed the little motion picture halls and heard the cheap pianos playing the jazz tunes of the hour. When he listened to the children of the streets shouting the ragtime lyrics of the day. When he sang on the Sabbath in the Synagogue with that same cry in his voice—that same wail. Then —then he would look back and see, in retrospect, the black-face comedian behind the footlights, singing to a theater full of people, his name outside in electric lights. He tried to shake off these sensations, but they persisted.

He could hear his mother moving about the kitchen, humming as she rattled her pots and pans. Out of the distance it seemed he could hear Yudelson's voice. "You should worry, Jakie," it was saying, "you can always have a job in my store."

He turned, scarcely hearing the man's words. He was anxious to have done with all this thing—impatient now, to go to the Synagogue

and sing. If he could sing, it might clear his mind. Everything had happened that possibly could happen. His mind was dulled. He didn't care. Anything, so that he might have action.

"Why doesn't Levy show up with that praying shawl?" he faced Yudelson nervously, irritably. "Why does everybody take so long?"

"I'll get him, Jakie," Yudelson moved hurriedly toward the door, anxious to placate Jack.

"Is the choir ready for a quick rehearsal?"

"Everything is ready."

"I want to go over at least 'Kol Nidre' once."

"They're standing already now waiting. I'll bring your praying shawl and skull cap. Everything will be all right." Yudelson hurried out.

Jack sat down again, his head in his hands. He began to hum the first plaintive cadences of "Kol Nidre." His voice welled a little louder as he reached the solemn, majestic passages. He might have been his own great grandfather in some far off Russian Ghetto praying to a God of vengeance a prayer thousands of years old. He did not hear the repeated knocks at the door. He did not see the man who opened the door and came slowly toward him. He sang on and on the wailing minor of the deathless tune.

CHAPTER XIX

The Die Is Cast

"Jack!" The singer jumped to his feet at the sound of his name. There stood Lee.

"Mr. Lee! How—why—" Jack rubbed his hand across his eyes. Then he stiffened and drew back, as though to protect himself from some unseen force.

"I got your message," Lee began sternly. "Gene told me what you said. He gave me this address. Do you realize what you're doing?"

Jack nodded miserably. "I'd rather cut off my right arm than do this to you, Mr. Lee. Please believe me," he said simply.

"Forget all about *me*," Lee swept the idea aside with a gesture of his hand. "Think of yourself. Look here, boy, you're a young fellow. To-night is the chance of a lifetime for you; don't you know that?"

"I know it," Jack admitted sorrowfully.

"I don't know what you're thinking—you may feel in your heart that you're going to succeed anyway. I know better!" Lee was purposely antagonizing Jack in the hopes that he might rouse his fighting spirit by defying him

to make good in the theater. "If you don't come through for me to-night," he continued, mercilessly prodding the boy, "I'll never take you back again. I couldn't engage you after an affair like this. Neither will anyone else. Rumors as to why you left will be all over Broadway to-morrow—and they won't all be true—if I know Broadway. Your name's going to be mud, I can tell you that right now. Stage people have very little sympathy with the sort of thing you're trying to do now."

Jack winced. "I know it, Mr. Lee," he answered dully. I'm not asking for any sympathy." He sank down again on the couch and stared at the table.

Lee decided that he had better try another method. The boy was stubborn, but there must be some way of getting around him. "Where is your father?" he asked at last. Jack merely nodded toward the bedroom door. "How sick is he? Is he too sick to be talked to?"

Jack nodded again. "It would kill him. He can't be disturbed."

"Well, I should think he'd be proud of you when you tell him what a great opportunity you have," Lee urged. "Why not try to explain matters to him?"

"Even if I could talk to him he wouldn't be able to understand any more what I meant than

you can understand why I came down here tonight," Jack insisted.

"Well, why *did* you come down here tonight?"

"Oh, I don't know," Jack turned away wearily, feeling that no explanations could help him now, even if Lee might be able to appreciate his kind of reasoning. "I can't tell you—I'm here—that's enough, isn't it?"

"Maybe for you, it is," Lee began to wax sarcastic. "For me, it isn't. I can tell you why you came—if you want to know." He didn't wait for an answer, but hurried on, heckling the boy. "You came because you haven't any guts—you're—you're—weak."

"Don't give me any more analysis," Jack broke in bitterly. "It gives me a headache."

"Well, you're going to have a hell of a lot bigger headache when my lawyers get after you," Lee had decided on a new plan of attack.

"Lawyers?" Jack looked up puzzled.

"Yes, lawyers! You know, my boy, you signed a pay-or-play contract," Lee blustered, "and you didn't sign it with me as an individual. You signed it with a corporation of which I am the president. That corporation has stockholders. I've got to protect the interests of those stockholders whether it goes against my personal wishes or not. I can't get up a syndicate involving the amount of money

this one does, and expect those people who have put their money in, to stand by and face a loss that I can prevent. Besides, they have a voting power, you know——"

"Did you have to ask the stockholders to vote on it when you hired me?" Jack argued with a slight show of interest.

"No, certainly not. I produce the show myself."

"Well, then, *fire* me without asking them," Jack rose and wandered about the room. "But keep the lawyers away, Mr. Lee," he pleaded piteously. "I don't know anything about law. I can't think about anything now."

"Look here, Jack," Lee decided to make a personal appeal. "This afternoon I broke with my biggest backer on your account. If I had fired you then everything would have been all right. I didn't—and now I've got to put all my own money into the show. Every dollar I have on earth is staked to win on this opening to-night. I hate to have to talk this way, Jack, but don't you see? You can make or break me. It's all up to you. If you don't go on to-night do you see what I stand to lose? Every penny I have."

"It's your money against my father's life, Mr. Lee," Jack dropped into a chair beside the table and buried his head in his arms. "What can I do?"

"What can you do? I'll tell you what you can do," Lee stepped closer to the boy and laid his hand on the other's shoulder. "You have just one hour to get back to the theater and keep your contract with me. Come on, I'll take you."

"Why can't you postpone the opening?" Jack suggested, looking up at the producer hopefully.

"Postpone the show! That's utterly ridiculous!" Lee spoke sharply. "Don't you realize that I don't own the theater—I'm only renting it. I've got to put this on to-night. If I stall off any longer the owners will be at my throat. They've got a show of their own; they're only too anxious to get a chance to have the theater themselves. They'd jump at the opportunity to put me out. Every day's delay is losing money for them. You've got to remember that. They get a percentage of my receipts— that's the contract I've got with them."

"Maybe you could get another theater?"

"What! At this time of year!" Lee became indignant. "You've got a hell of a nerve asking me that. Why, there isn't a theater to be had in town. Nobody ever did anything like that for me, and I'm damned if I'm going to do it for you."

"You're hard—terribly hard," Jack sighed hopelessly.

"Hard! You bet I'm hard. I'm in a hard business. You can't buck Broadway and be anything else but hard. If you ever give one inch, you're lost. I know. I haven't played this theater game for nothing. I know what I'm doing. And the sooner you find out that you can't be soft, the better off you'll be. That's what's the matter with you now. You're soft, and you're getting licked because of it."

"Soft?" Jack stared up at Lee, his voice trembling, with suppressed emotion. "Soft, because I'm giving up the biggest night of my life to keep my mother's heart from breaking? Soft, because I'm trying to save my father's life—because I'm going to sing in a synagogue so that he can be proud of his family name? Do you think that stuff I'm going to sing tonight means anything to me any more? Do you think it's going to be easy for me to stand up there on that platform and pray for the congregation when I could be singing to a crowded house on an opening night in a theater and hear the applause and know that I was getting my chance and making good. Soft, because I'm giving up the only girl I ever loved—the only person who really means anything to me? Soft?" He laughed bitterly and turned away.

"What do you mean, giving her up?" Lee looked surprised.

"Yes, giving her up," Jack said colorlessly.

A Warner Bros. Production. *The Jazz Singer.*

MARY CONGRATULATES JACK ON HIS BROADWAY TRIUMPH.

"Oh, I know, there's nothing else to do. She's like you. She thinks I'm soft and sentimental —and probably after this she'll think I was scared—afraid of the whole business. I went through hell before I came down here—don't think this was easy. But I'm here, now. I've seen my father. And I'm going to stay here."

"Say, cut that comedy. You're only kidding yourself into thinking that," Lee spoke sarcastically. "The whole truth of the matter is that you're making a martyr of yourself and enjoying it. I've seen that pulled before. You get a whale of a wallop out of seeing yourself as the poor, abused boy—you like it, and you think everybody ought to sympathize with you because of it. Well, I don't mind telling you I don't think much of it, and I haven't got any sympathy for you. My God! If you *had* any guts you'd have talked your father and mother out of this notion——"

"Oh, what's the use of wasting words this way, Mr. Lee," Jack shrugged his shoulders. "It won't do any good. My father's religion is like your business, that's all. I took my chance." He looked at his watch and rose. "Good-by, Mr. Lee," he turned toward the door. "I have to run along now."

"Jakie," Mrs. Rabinowitz came in from the kitchen, a glass of the tea in her hand, "Jakie, I got ready for you some tea."

"No, Mama, not now, I don't want any," Jack shook his head. "This is my mother, Mr. Lee," he turned to the producer. "Mama, this is Mr. Lee, the producer of the show I was rehearsing with—my boss."

Lee and Mrs. Rabinowitz contemplated each other silently before they spoke.

"I've got to practice with the choir—I'll be back," Jack picked up his hat, nodded, and went out.

Lee stood drumming idly with his fingers on the table.

"So, you are Jakie's boss?" Mrs. Rabinowitz spoke finally. "You know Jakie's father is sick?" Lee nodded. "You got a papa?" Mrs. Rabinowitz questioned.

"I had a father—and a mother, too," Lee explained gently. "They both died while I was working, but I went right on. I was working for another man and I had to attend to my business."

"Your papa and mama wouldn't attend to *their* business if *you* should die, God forbid," Mrs. Rabinowitz spoke firmly.

"My father and mother were both on the stage all their lives. In the theater we go on no matter what happens. It's part of our duty. I know they were proud that I carried on their traditions of what is right on the stage."

"Jakie is doing *his* duty."

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Rabinowitz, but I don't seem to feel that way about it. Your son has a contract with me and from a business standpoint he should keep that contract. Furthermore, he owes me a great deal—I've done a lot for him."

"From business, I don't know," Mrs. Rabinowitz shrugged her shoulders. "All I know is what is in my Jakie's heart. In his heart is love for his God and for his papa, and he wants he should sing to-night the way his papa learned him. Excuse me, I got to go to the kitchen. I forgot to light my candles."

"May I use the phone?" Lee asked.

"Sure, go ahead. Use all you want," Mrs. Rabinowitz nodded as she went out.

"Thank you." Lee sat down before the instrument. "Circle 13876," he gave the number and waited. "Hello, hello. I want to speak to Gene. Mr. Lee calling." He waited again. "Hello, that you, Gene? I'm down at Jack's home. Go ahead with everything just as I told you. We positively open to-night. Carter'll take all Jack's scenes and numbers. He'll do until we can get Valentine up in the part. Now connect me with the booking office." He turned as he heard a knock at the door. "Come in," he called, still holding the phone. "Mary! How did you get down here?"

"Gene told me where you went." Mary came into the room and stood waiting until Lee should finish his conversation.

"Hello," he turned again to the phone. "Who's this—Anthony? Did you hear from the booking office . . . No, I told you to tell them we did *not* postpone. Jack Robin suddenly taken ill. Carter will appear to-night. Get Ted Valentine as soon as you can. He can work in every number we've got. I'll be up in a little while. Good-by." He hung up the receiver and turned to Mary.

"Harry, aren't you being just a little bit hard on Jack?" Mary began. "He isn't doing this because he wants to."

"Oh, isn't he?" Lee turned on the girl sharply. "He doesn't have to do this, you know. He's only acting childish and sentimental. He's willing to be a failure just to be able to pat himself on the back and say: 'I did this for my father and mother.' "

"Nothing of the sort," Mary flared up. "You're being just as silly as he is. Why, that boy's crazy to make good for you. You ought to know that. Honestly, Harry, sometimes I wonder how on earth you ever got where you are when you know so little about people. Give Jack three days, and he'll be back, ready to sing his heart out for you."

"You take one look at him and you'll change

your mind," Lee retorted. "I know—I've been talking to him."

"Well, where is he? I want to see him. I've got to talk to him—bring him back to his senses. He can't stay down here. Why, his whole career will be ruined."

"I wish you could do something with him, Mary," Lee nodded thoughtfully. "But I don't think you can. I'm going to talk to his mother. You'd better, too. If we can convince her that he belongs to us uptown—and not down here——"

"Have you met his mother?" Lee nodded. "Well, then—you ought to know," Mary continued. "Harry, she's a real person. I couldn't decide for a long while what to do. Then I thought if I could show her the truth—" she broke off as Mrs. Rabinowitz entered. "How do you do, Mrs. Rabinowitz," Mary greeted the older woman.

"Hello, lady," Mrs. Rabinowitz smiled. "Your name I don't know, so excited I was in the theayter. You came maybe you should hear Jakie sing to-night?"

"Where is Jack?" Mary questioned. "I'd like to see him."

Mrs. Rabinowitz drew back. "Right now you couldn't see him," she shook her head emphatically. "He's in the synagogue practicing with the choir. Open the window and you could hear

him just like you was setting there." She went over and threw open the window.

"No, no, Miss Dale wants to talk to Jack," Lee interrupted impatiently.

"Miss Dale is from you a friend?" Mrs. Rabinowitz looked at Lee suspiciously.

"I'm a very good friend of Mr. Lee's," Mary caught the note of suspicion in Mrs. Rabinowitz's voice, and hurried on. "But I'm also a very good friend of Jack's."

"A good friend from Jakie's would leave him alone to-night. I am Jakie's mama. I should know. Did I make him he should eat? No, he wants he should practice with the choir, so I let him go hungry. Sometimes love lets people go hungry."

"I love Jack, too, Mrs. Rabinowitz," Mary declared softly. "And that's why I want to talk to him. I want him to go to the theater to-night. It's his one great opportunity. You know I found him. I recognized his ability," Mary explained to the puzzled mother. "I helped him to realize all of his ambitions. I'm intensely interested in his work and his career. Oh, can't you understand," she pleaded. "I'm trying to do the one thing a woman can do for a man—help him to help himself."

"Mrs. Rabinowitz," Lee broke in, "let me ask you one question—when was the last time that Jack attended a synagogue?"

"When he was confirmed—that was before he —he run away. He was thirteen years old. He sang a solo in the choir. It was beautiful."

"Mary, did he ever attend a synagogue since you've known him?" Mary shook her head in negation. "No! And he ran away from all this, didn't he?" Lee indicated the room. "I'm asking you this because I want you to see that Jack can't be true to himself and sing down here. Do you think for one instant that the Cantor would want Jack to sing unless he could sing with the heart of a Jew? Do you know what Jack's saying to himself right now? He's saying: 'My career is gone. The girl I love has lost her belief in me. I don't want to sing this stuff that I can't understand—to a God whose meaning I don't get.' He's saying: 'If I don't do this my father will die and my mother will be heartbroken. I have to do it whether I want to or not.' "

Mrs. Rabinowitz raised her hands as though to ward off a blow. "No, no, it ain't the true. It's lies! It's lies!"

"Harry, you're hurting her." Mary caught hold of Lee's arm. But Lee was swept along by his own power of speech.

"Suppose the Cantor could see into Jack's heart!" he exclaimed. "What would he see there? Jazz music, nigger music! Not the prayers of the synagogue! Do you suppose

that would make him happy when he hears Jack sing? No!" Lee was so excited that he did not notice the door opening.

"Mama, you'd better get ready. The services will begin soon." Jack entered the room, his eyes blazing black in his strained, white face, his prayer shawl and skull cap in his arms. "Mary!" Suddenly he realized the presence of the girl. "You came!"

"Yes, Jack."

They stood gazing at each other for a long moment. Only the ticking of the clock broke the stillness of the air.

CHAPTER XX

The Day of Atonement

1

"I'm glad you came." Jack made no move to approach Mary. He only stared at her. He did not see his mother's frightened glances or notice her apparent emotional strain.

"Jakie," Mrs. Rabinowitz spoke faintly, "Jakie, I should ask you something. I want you should tell me the true." Jack nodded. "Jakie, answer me: Are you singing to-night because you love me and your papa and your God—because you want to be in the Synagogue on the Day of Atonement—or is it in your heart you should sing jazz music in the theayters?"

"Mama!" There was a hopeless terror in Jack's cry. He turned on Mary and Lee savagely. "What are you two doing here? What are you trying to do to me?" he demanded. "Did you put this into my mother's head?"

"I did, Jack," Lee admitted.

"And so did I," Mary insisted. "Oh, Jack, won't you try to understand? I love you, Jack, I love you. I love you so much that I can be cruel to you for your own sake. I only want to know that you are really being true to yourself by staying here—and then I'll go. But I'll

come back to you, Jack—I'll come back," Mary held out her hands, pleading. "Just tell me that you lied when you said that the only thing that you really cared about was your career. Tell me that you lied when you told me that nothing was as dear to you as your work. Tell me those were lies—and then I'll go."

Jack clenched his teeth; the nails of his tense, shut fists dug deep into the palms of his hands. He turned to his mother. "Get ready, Mama. We'll be late."

"Jack, tell us the truth before we go," Lee faced the boy about. "Do you or do you not want to come back to the theater? When I was talking to you just a few minutes ago didn't you want to come back with me? Tell me, Jack, didn't you?"

"Jack, when you were talking to me this afternoon," Mary broke in, "I asked you whether you cared about your career on the stage. I can remember your answer, and the way you said it. You said: 'It's the only thing in the world I do care about.' Was that true?"

"Jakie, do you want to sing in the Synagogue to-night?" Mrs. Rabinowitz questioned eagerly.

Jack looked about him in desperation. He was like a trapped animal now. There was no way to escape. He sank down in a chair emotionally exhausted. "No, I don't want to," he muttered.

"But you come home," Mrs. Rabinowitz bent over the boy tenderly. "It's all right, Jakie," she whispered. "It's all right. I didn't know until now how different your life is from your papa's and from mine. I didn't know that by you being a jazz singer is like by your papa being a Cantor. You should do what is in your heart, Jakie." She stroked her son's bowed head. "Do what is in your heart. Always you can come back to your mama. But if you sing to-night and God ain't in your heart, your papa, he'll know. All his life your papa loved God and the truth. I will tell your papa. Maybe he will understand."

Jack laughed—a bitter, sardonic laugh. "Me, a Cantor! Funny, that's what it is—funny." He pounded his fist hysterically. "I was rehearsing with the choir. They were all like strangers to me—all those kids that I used to play with. I didn't even know them—never seen them before, it seemed. Sure! I'm from uptown—Broadway. They looked at me peculiarly. I could read what they thought. They were all pointing at me and saying: 'Jakie Rabinowitz, jazz singer! Jakie Rabinowitz, jazz singer.' "

Lee went over and stood beside the boy. "We have just exactly a half an hour to get to the theater," he spoke very quietly.

"It's all right, Jakie. You can go!" Mrs.

Rabinowitz's voice rang with deep fullness. She might have been a mother of Israel offering up her first born for the sacrifice. There was a look of supreme joy in her face.

At that moment the door to the Cantor's room opened and the nurse stepped out. "Will you come in, Mrs. Rabinowitz?" she spoke quietly, but her appearance terrorized Jack and his mother into action.

"What is the matter? The Cantor? Is he—is he worse?" Mrs. Rabinowitz hurried to the door, followed by Jack.

"I'm afraid—it's the end." The nurse hesitated. "I want to phone the doctor." She sat down to make her call.

For a moment Jack hesitated. Then he caught his mother's hand. "Mama," he cried, "Mama! I'm going to sing to-night. Tell papa I'm going to sing! I'm not going back to the theater."

"Jakie!" Mrs. Rabinowitz burst into tears.

"I'm your son, Mama," Jack's voice was like clear ice. "I'm the son of my father. Mama, I'm a Cantor, see? I'm Cantor Rabinowitz! God's going to hear me sing 'Kol Nidre' to-night! I'll be singing to you and papa, Mama—papa will hear me singing. He'll understand!"

"Jakie! Your papa will be so happy—so

happy—" With tears streaming she went in to her husband.

"Oh, my God!" Jack moaned. "Papa is dying. I know it! It's a sign. He told me God would punish me! He told me. I thought I could get away from Cantors! Well, God showed me. The Day of Atonement! I'll say it's the Day of Atonement!" He burst into a throaty sobbing. Mary went over and took hold of Jack's arm, soothing him.

"It's all right, Jack," she murmured. "It's all right." Softly she talked to him until the sobbing ceased and the tears stopped. Jack picked up his prayer shawl and put on his skull cap. "Jack, is there anything you want me to do?" Mary asked.

"No, only just root for me—to get over. Like you did before," Jack smiled faintly. "I'll be all right—I'm not afraid. What a little boy learns he never forgets. Good-by, Mary." He kissed the mazuzah, and in a moment he was gone.

Mary and Lee sat down, staring at each other. The nurse finished talking to the doctor and hurried back to her patient.

"The doctor will be here in just a few minutes," she told Mrs. Rabinowitz who was bending over the Cantor anxiously. "I'm doing what I can." She busied herself about the bedside table.

The Cantor scarcely breathed now. His face was the color of ashes, and a strange, blue pallor was on his lips. Once in a while his fingers trembled spasmodically. That was the only sign of life he showed. Mrs. Rabinowitz took his hand and smoothed it. The tears fell thick and fast on her broad bosom, but she made no move to wipe them away. The Cantor coughed. His entire body shook, and then became still. He did not even seem to breathe. Mrs. Rabinowitz bent over him, listening. She could just catch the faint intake of his breath.

Suddenly on the still air there came the faint sounds of music, wafted through the open window. The Cantor stirred slightly. Mrs. Rabinowitz raised her head, listening.

"Open the door, nurse," she said softly. "I want the Cantor should hear Jakie sing."

The nurse looked at the still figure on the bed and then quietly pushed the door open. The music sounded a little louder now. The first plaintive notes of the "Kol Nidre" came stealing in. Louder and louder it swelled, the choir chanting in a rhythmic minor. Louder and louder the infinite pathos of the song of Zion welled and rose. High above it, sounding clear and resonant, rolled the voice of Jakie Rabinowitz. Rising and falling, swelling to ecstatic heights, the flood of prayer filled the

little synagogue and stole across the Cantor's bedroom.

With tremendous effort the Cantor slowly opened his eyes. They fell shut again, but in another moment they were open, the misty look slowly clearing. With supernatural force he raised his head slightly. It fell back on the pillow. Mrs. Rabinowitz, catching his wish, lifted him. His head rested like a baby's on her breast. He looked up. A glorified smile lighted his face. He drew a deep breath.

"It's my Jakie, Sara," he murmured.

"Yes, papa, it's Jakie."

He caught his breath. His throat rattled, hoarsely. His fingers clutched spasmodically at the coverlet. His eyes rolled in his head. His body went limp. The nurse rushed to the bedside. She caught hold of his pulse. She bent her head to listen to the heartbeats. Mrs. Rabinowitz stared, unseeing, listening to the music that throbbed wildly and surged through the room. It was Jakie—Jakie singing. Cantor Rabinowitz singing to his God in the temple of his fathers. She sighed peacefully. The nurse raised her head.

"It's all over, Mrs. Rabinowitz," she said sadly.

Mrs. Rabinowitz stared at her uncomprehendingly. She looked down at the limp figure on

her bosom. The nurse was taking her away and allowing the head to fall back on the pillow. She closed the unseeing eyes. Mrs. Rabinowitz looked dazedly at the figure of her husband.

"He's—he's dead?" She swayed. The nurse caught her and forced her into the chair. "He's dead," she kept murmuring to herself. Now there were no tears. She couldn't cry. She sat swaying—swaying, moving with the rhythm of the music. Her brain was numb.

In the next room Mary and Lee sat silent. From the synagogue came the radiance of light streaming through the stained glass windows. It bathed the homely little room in pristine splendor. It caught on the cut glass and spun glistening rainbows of color that darted off in thin lines. It turned to massive beauty the heavy old furniture. It played at hide-and-seek in the corners.

As the music swelled louder Lee looked up and shook his head. "There goes your blackface comedian," he said listlessly.

"If you think that boy's going to be a Cantor all his life you're very much mistaken," Mary answered vehemently. "He'll never stay down here. The trouble now is that he's under a very heavy, mental strain. He can't see things clearly. Wait until he comes to his senses."

"I don't agree with you," Lee sighed. "His

career on the stage is ended. He'll never come back. This one incident is going to remain in his mind, and all his life will be one long Day of Atonement. This is in his blood—all this. He won't be able to get away from it."

"Yes, he will," Mary argued. "I'm going to see that he does. Give him another chance, Harry. He's a great actor and a great singer. He's worth while. If I can get him to come back, will you reconsider about sending for Valentine?"

"Oh, I don't know." Lee was weary and tired. He got up and walked about the room. He looked at his watch. "Good Lord, it's almost eight o'clock. Look here. We're opening tonight. We've got to get up to the theater. You're not dressed or anything. Thank God you don't go on right away. This is a hell of a way to open a show. The star and the producer sitting down on the East Side until it's almost time for the curtain to ring up. Come on. Get your things. We've got to beat it."

"Wait!" She caught hold of Lee and listened.

"What's the matter?"

"They're praying. I want you to listen." The pair moved over to the window.

Black against the softly tinted, autumnal sky the high tenement buildings reared their heads. Little blotches of light split from hundreds of

windows and lay softly on the gloaming. The street noises were very faint, now. There were few pedestrians on the streets. Only the trolley cars and the trucks broke the Sabbath stillness that hung over the city. All the Ghetto was at Synagogue.

Clear and deep the voice of Jakie Rabinowitz came to them. They stared at each other amazed. Here was the same quality that had been in the voice of Jack Robin that afternoon when he cried his "mammy" song in the theater. It was the same voice, the same wailing sound, the same rhythm, the same catch in the throat. Mary turned to Lee.

"You are listening to a black-face comedian singing to his God," Mary spoke in awed, hushed tones. "Don't you see, Harry, this isn't so far from Broadway? It's all in his blood, really. Can't you feel the same quality here that you felt this afternoon when he sang? Why, he'll have to come back."

"I hope so."

They stood there listening, fascinated. Finally Lee turned. "Come on! We've got to get out of here and uptown." He took Mary's arm, and the two went, closing the door silently behind them.

2

The multi-colored lights of the Great White

Way winked and blinked on the frosty air. Theaters blazoned their wares with vivid brightness of electricity and colored posters. Crowds hastened up and down Broadway—women in gleaming evening dress; men in formal black and white. Taxis honked and hooted their way through the maze of pedestrians.

A steady stream of cabs drew up before the Winter Garden Theater. They deposited their charges on the wide threshold of the vast pile of stone dedicated to the gayety of all peoples. The theatergoers in search of an evening of pleasure thronged the lobby and the foyer. Many of them stopped before the large easels filled with photographs. On one side reposed a full length portrait of Mary Dale in ballet costume. Opposite it a portrait of a black-face comedian with the gilt inscription "Jack Robin."

For a month, now, the "April Follies" had been listed as one of the theatrical successes of the season. But to-night for the first time this portrait of the "jazz singer" decorated the lobby. The press had accepted the announcement made on the opening night of the illness of the comedian with some comment. Whispers as to the real reason for his failure to appear went the rounds, but newer gossip had soon dulled the poignancy of the story. Now, however, with its New York début at hand a stir

of excitement once more rippled along Broadway, and the theater was crowded with the usual group of first-nighters waiting to pass judgment on this recent discovery of Harry Lee's.

Back stage the usual activities were taking place. The noise of shifting scenery, of mechanics and electricians, battled with the clatter of the chorus girls lined up for the opening number. With regular precision the houselights went down and the curtain came up. The audience chattered vaguely for a moment and then settled into silence.

In the wings stood the black-face comedian awaiting his cue. Beside him stood the golden-haired ballet dancer all set to go on. They looked at each other and smiled. The black-face comedian pressed the ballet dancer's hand. "Is there anything I can do for you, Jack?" the ballet dancer asked the black-face comedian.

"Yes, just root for me like you always do, Mary," the black-face comedian laughed nervously and squeezed the ballet dancer's hand.

"Ouch," the ballet dancer laughed, too. "That ring hurts—I'm not used to it." They both looked down at the gleaming diamond that glistened on the third finger of the ballet dancer's left hand. "There's your cue. I'll watch from here." The ballet dancer shoved the black-face comedian out onto the stage.

He fell into his shamble and oozed on. The audience applauded vociferously. The orchestra vamped the opening bars. He took up the verse of the song. Then he ran on into the chorus.

"And—I—want—you—all—to—know . . .
I—want—to—go . . .
Back—to—my—mammy. . . .
I'm through wanderin'—up—and—down . . .
I'm — goin' — to — strike — that — ol' —
home—town . . .
Where—the—folks'll—gather—roun' . . .
An' greet me. . . .
I want—to—go . . .
Back—to—my—mammy. . . ."

The house looked black and dark from behind the footlights. There was only one person Jack could see. Up in the box sat Mrs. Rabinowitz in heavy, black silk. As the cry came from across the footlights the black-face comedian's mother wiped a tear from her eyes and smiled. The audience thundered its applause. Again and again Jack took his bows. But all he saw was the figure in the box. He waved and blew a kiss. Mrs. Rabinowitz looked about her proudly. That was her son—her Jakie. She turned to Yudelson, sitting there beside her, and smiled.

Jack ran off at last. There in the wings stood Mary, waiting. Her eyes were bright, and very, very big and blue. Her nose with that delicious little tip-tilt looked adorable. And her very red mouth with its sensitive contours had never seemed so delectable. They turned and strolled, hand in hand, back to the dressing rooms.

THE END

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